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The agonising heart

François René Blot

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THE AGONISING HEART.

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THE

AGONISING HEART.

SALVATION OF THE DYING,

CONSOLATION OF THE AFFLICTED.

BY

THE REV. FATHER BLOT.

AUTHOR OF THE "AGONY OF JESUS."

With the approbation of the Bishops of Versailles and Nantes.

PART II.

LONDON:
BURNS, OATES, & CO., PORTMAN STREET.

1870.

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Approbations.

WE have caused a book called *The Agonising Heart, Consolation of the Afflicted*, to be examined. It has been found perfectly orthodox, and is written with all the clearness, the ease, and correctness of expression which characterise the works of this pious and learned author. We therefore approve it, and strongly recommend it to all the afflicted.

Versailles, June 5, 1867.

+ PIERRE, BISHOP OF VERSAILLES.

ANTOINE MATHIAS ALEXANDRE JAQUEMET, by the grace of God and favour of the Holy Apostolic See, Bishop of Nantes.

In accordance with the report of the examiner appointed to read a book called *The Agonising Heart, Consolation of the Afflicted*, we declare it to be conformable to sound doctrine, written with unction and in a clear and easy style, and well fitted to instruct, edify, and console the afflicted. We therefore recommend it to the Faithful of our diocese.

Given at Nantes, in our Episcopal Palace, under our signature, the seal of our arms and the signature of our Secretary, on the 29th September, 1867.

+ ALEXANDER, BISHOP OF NANTES.

By order of the Bishop, DE LA GUIBOURGERE.

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PREFACE.

JESUS Agonising is the Angel of great consolation. He consoles us by His condescension, by His trouble and fear, by each word of His Prayer, by its repetition, by the appearance of the Angel, by His Sweat of Blood. Moreover, He multiplies comforters for us. Every lawful consolation which we receive by means of human beings comes from the Agonising Heart of our Divine Master; every one who brings us comfort has received from Him the mission and the power to be a consoling angel to us. We have dwelt on these important truths in the *Agony of Jesus*,* and will not here repeat what we have already said. The afflicted may find in that book thoughts of comfort.

In this second part of our work on the Agonising Heart, we bring before them practical consolations. We do not address

* *L'Agonie de Jesus*, l. x., ch. v., vi., t. iii., pp. 261—294.

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ourselves merely to the members of a special Association; but we hope to disperse the dark clouds of mental sorrows and of external sufferings from the hearts of many of the Faithful, by leading them to find their consolation in consoling others, in converting the dying, in promoting the salvation of souls exposed to the greatest danger.

This work may also serve as a sort of manual for the use of the afflicted at the meetings and Feasts of the Confraternities of the Holy Agony and of the Agonising Heart. It is not enough to be acquainted with a Devotion and the works which belong to it, nor even to adopt the Devotion and take part in the works; the great thing is to catch its spirit and to become more and more deeply imbued with it. In each Devotion, as in Religion itself, practice ought to follow knowledge, and to spring from the heart and be accompanied by suitable dispositions.

The first part of this work describes the Devotion to the Agonising Heart of Jesus,

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and the Confraternity and Community which have sprung from it. The object of the second part is to promote its spirit, the spirit of our Lord Himself, which raises us to Heaven by resignation and prayer, and brings us back to earth by self-devotion and compassion. It is divided into three sections, the first of which points out the acts which ought to be made in time of affliction and renewed every year; the second gives devotions for each month, and the third contains exercises of intercession, amongst which each person may choose some to be performed weekly. The first two sections point out a portion suited for spiritual reading, and then give a meditation, followed by a practice, and by some great example of patience or zeal. These may be used throughout Lent, and, as the meditations are long, many people may find it well to divide or repeat them. Persons in general have not the habit of mental prayer, and are only able to make a sort of meditative reading, which is a reason for the length of the meditations.

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The first section begins by instructions on the Apostolic use of affliction. These are followed by a novena to be made by those actually in sorrow, or anxious to unite themselves as closely as possible with Jesus in His Agony. This novena may be used during the Octave of the Feasts of the Sacred Heart, and of the Prayer of our Lord on the Mount of Olives. And why should we not imitate the practice of the Church, which not only prolongs certain solemnities by an octave, but anticipates them by a vigil? The meditations in the second section are drawn exclusively from the Agony in the Garden, while those in the first section treat of the Agony of Nazareth and the Agony of Calvary. How many hearts are in agony all through their life! They ought to be all the more ready to console their fellow-sufferers, and to succour the dying in their perilous agony. The loving Heart of Jesus suffered during thirty-three years, not only from those things which touched Itself, such as the foresight of the Passion and the assaults

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of the Evil One, but from the sight of our sins and our impenitency, from a compassion for our griefs and afflictions. This divine sympathy for all human woe is an inexhaustible source of consolation for all sufferers, and those who draw from it to-day will become the advocates of the dying to-morrow.

The second section may be used on the first Friday of each month, the day when our Lord specially wishes us to honour His Sacred Heart. It may also serve for the Devotion of the Holy Hour, which is performed on Thursday night from eleven to twelve o'clock, or it may be performed at any other hour on Thursday evening. The Faithful may also use it in making their adoration and intercession for the dying before the Blessed Sacrament, according to the manner suggested by the statutes of the Confraternity. No particular practice is binding, but every one can follow the inclination of his own devotion. We would merely offer some assistance to those who long to honour the Agonies of

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our Lord, in order to gain grace for the troubled and the dying.

The third section is a collection of pious exercises, partly original and partly taken from different authors, adapted for the time of intercession, for the Holy Hour, and for any moments which those in affliction may be able to devote to prayer. The special work of the Confraternity is prayer, and we cannot too strongly urge it on all its members.

We do not add the statutes of the Association, because they vary in different places. It would seem better that the local Director should have them printed with their necessary modifications on a separate sheet for distribution. God grant that all the members of the Confraternity may be full of zeal for the honour of the Agonising Heart of Jesus, for the consolation of the afflicted and the conversion of the dying, and for the spread of their holy Association!

Saint-Germain-en-Laye, February 19, 1867,
Feast of the Prayer of our Lord on the Mount of Olives.

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THE AGONISING HEART.

I.—ON THE USE OF OUR AFFLICTIONS.

If we were writing for people who follow the maxims of the world, we might ask them what use they make of their time, their talents, their prosperity, their influence, and their riches. But as we are writing only for those who faithfully observe the precepts of the Gospel, and who make a lawful use of all God's gifts, we content ourselves with asking — "What use do you make of your afflictions?" In this word we include trials and troubles of every kind; domestic sorrows, the loss of relations, reverses of fortune, public calamities, sickness, infirmities, death, difficulties in the practice of virtue, exterior and interior mortifications, and all those things which the Agonising Heart of Jesus bore for us in Gethsemani, such as fears, weariness, dryness, mortal sadness, desertion of friends, treachery from those we love. What use do we make of these afflictions? We have no more precious treasure, and yet we neglect nothing so much.

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CHAPTER I.

OF THE USE OF OUR AFFLICTIONS FOR OURSELVES.

His manifold afflictions were the means by which our Lord completely repaired the outrage offered to God and the ill done to man. St. Thomas,* following the teaching of theology, shows us that, by His Passion, that is to say, by His sufferings and death, Jesus Christ delivered us from sin, from the power of the devil, and the punishment due to our faults; reconciled us to God, opened to us the gate of Heaven, and merited for Himself glory and exaltation. The Holy Scriptures attribute our salvation to the Blood shed for us by the Divine Victim. Our afflictions, when united to those of our glorious Head, share, in a certain measure, in the efficacy which belongs to them. By means of afflictions we concur in making reparation to the glory of our Heavenly Father, the full brightness of which our sins had impaired. The salvation of our brethren on earth is promoted, those in Purgatory are assisted, and our own sanctification is forwarded. Our individual humanity, being united to the holy humanity of our Lord, partakes of the divine

* St. Thomas, *Summ.*, p. 3, q. xlix.

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nature, and thus the sufferings which we endure in a spirit of union with His sufferings share their divine efficacy. This union pre-supposes a state of habitual grace on our part and the free consent of our will. The divine life of our Head flows into His living members, just as the sap flows from the trunk into the living branches of the tree. If we thus live by the life of the true Vine (John xv. i.), our afflictions bear fruits like those of His Passion.

If, then, we are in a state of spiritual death when affliction overtakes us, we must first be grafted anew into Jesus Christ, by means of sincere penitence, so that the sap of life may flow into our souls through the channels of the sacraments. Mortal sin cuts us off from Jesus Christ like a branch from the vine, or at least it reduces us to the state of a dead branch, through which the sap no longer flows. If, even in such a case, we draw near to our Lord by resignation, He does not leave us without aid; He labours to bring us again to life, to reconcile us with God, to restore our union with Him, so that we may again live by His life. Certainly, as long as we remain in mortal sin our acceptance of suffering is, strictly speaking, without any merit; it gives us no right to a reward on the grounds of justice or condignity, but it has a kind of merit of congruity, which disposes God to look on us with favour and mercy, and prepares the way for complete

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reconciliation. How many prodigal sons, who had gone astray after the pleasures of the world, have been brought back to their Father's arms and heart by disappointments, sorrows, and losses?

But if we are happily in a state of grace when affliction comes, then let us rejoice, after the example of St. Paul, that we fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in our flesh and in our spirit (Coloss. i. 24). Our affliction, in union with that of our Saviour, delivers us from the remains and consequences of sin, hinders the devil from regaining dominion over us, pays the debt we owe to divine justice, purifies our heart more and more, by making us sorrow for our venial sins of frailty or negligence, and by obtaining their remission, and finally urges us forward in the way of self-abnegation. After we have been forsaken by friends and made the sport of enemies, like Jesus in Jerusalem; after we have been crucified, like Jesus on Calvary, affliction buries our old nature in the grave with Jesus. "This," says Father Faber, "is the grand work which sorrow does for all of us. It entombs us in the will of God. It buries our love, together with our sorrow, in the Blessed Sacrament. Sorrow is, as it were, the missionary of the divine will. It is the Prince of the Apostles. The Church is built upon it. The gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. It is sorrow that digs the grave of

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self and blesses it, and burns incense in it, and buries self therein, and fills it up, and makes the flowers grow upon the tomb. The great secret of holiness is never to have our hearts in our own breasts, but living and beating in the Heart of Jesus, and this can rarely be accomplished except through the operation of sanctified sorrow. Happy, therefore, is he who has a sorrow at all hours to sanctify."*

All men might, then, be happy and holy, for all suffer. But alas! how often is suffering borne as it is borne in hell; how many men suffer like the devils or like the lost, with murmuring, rebellion, hatred, and blasphemy. Those who receive afflictions in such a spirit not only fail to gain any merit, but add to their iniquities, lay up for themselves heavier punishment in the next world, and cause the hand of God to fall also on the innocent, who in this world have often to suffer, on account of their guilty brethren being united to them by the bond of a common humanity. Again, some men bear sorrow in a way which is merely earthly—with stoical indifference, not from any supernatural motive, but only because they cannot escape it, and so it brings forth no fruits of salvation for them. How much they lose! Suffering occupies a large place in our life, and might be made fruitful like the Blood of Jesus Christ, yet we gain nothing by it, either for

* Faber, *The Foot of the Cross*, ch. viii.

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ourselves or for others, because we take it in a merely natural way. We remain beneath its burden, like a poor slave bowed down under the yoke, without profiting from it even so much as to lay up gradually enough for our ransom, and thus in the end attain our deliverance. The divine mission of such suffering is unfulfilled, and if it is not actually sinful, at any rate it is not apostolic. True followers of Christ suffer with patience and resignation, with love and humility, in union and conformity with their crucified Master; their hearts, like His Agonising Heart, are generous enough to desire suffering. How well united to the Divine Heart were those Saints who exclaimed, like St. Francis Xavier, "Yet more afflictions, O Lord, yet more;" like St. Teresa, "To suffer or to die;" and like St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, "To suffer and not to die." God only knows the apostolic work done by the heroic sufferings of such souls. And if we suffer like Christians we may also be Apostles. One aspiration full of zeal may make the sorrows which we endure in union with Jesus Christ the means of salvation for many souls.

The employment of our afflictions for the spiritual good of our neighbour is what we particularly wish to recommend. If a man is cultivating the field of sorrow, its unfruitfulness must depress him or its fruitfulness console him. We can better bear to sow with tears if we

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know that we shall reap with joyfulness. We can go with ready feet to and fro along the furrows, casting the seed and watering it with tears, in the hope that we shall soon return to the same furrows and carry away golden sheaves. (Ps. cxxv. 5, 6.)

CHAPTER II.

ON BEARING AFFLICTIONS FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS.

ACTION, Prayer, and Suffering, are three Apostolates by which Christians may cooperate with our Lord in His work of Redemption. The Angel of the Schools teaches us that the actions as well as the sufferings of Jesus Christ have divine power to save mankind and to put away sin.* The Apostolate of Action comprises all the various and valuable Catholic works of the present day. How it rejoices the heart to see so many fervent laymen and pious widows consecrate some of their time and wealth to such objects! The action of others is confined to giving instruction by word of mouth or by writing. This is the Apostolate of Teaching, which our Lord practised in His public life and then intrusted to His Apostles, whom He

* St. Thomas, *Summa*, p. iii., q. 48, art. vi., et q. 49, art. i.

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sent forth to teach all nations. Our readers are already acquainted with the Apostolate of Prayer. God grant them grace always to practise it with more and more fervour, after the example of the Word made Flesh during the thirty-three years of His mortal life, and now in His eternal glory! The third Apostolate is one of Suffering, and forms the subject of the present chapter. Our Lord exercised this apostolate from the moment of His Incarnation to His Death, and He still exercises it mystically on our altars in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. He suffered and prayed longer than He preached, therefore the restoration of the world is the effect of His prayers and sufferings even more than of His teaching.

Does not this show us that sorrow of every kind has a divine mission, and is sent to enable us to work for the salvation of souls? Interior sorrows, mystical sufferings, secret afflictions, are not only a most precious means for the acquisition of solid virtues, and of a great degree of union with God, but they also give us an easy access to our Lord; they put us in the way of gaining the most abundant graces of conversion for sinners, and of perseverance for the just. The more we resemble Jesus in His Agony, the more apostolic our sufferings will be. Therefore, when the duration and intensity of our moral and spiritual sufferings reduces us to a kind of agony, and our heart is, as it were,

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undergoing martyrdom, let us rejoice that we are conformed to our Master, and fitted by Him for the fruitful Apostolate of Suffering.

But to make suffering apostolic, an intention must be from time to time expressed. It is quite true that our Lord's love for a faithful soul induces Him to grant many unasked favours to those who are specially dear to it. But in general, for the greater merit of His friends and their closer union with Him in His adoptive paternity, He would have them act more explicitly in regard to the distribution of His favours. When our Lord unites them to Himself, He fills them with His gifts, and lets them become as it were reservoirs of benefits; but charity for their neighbours must open an outlet for these treasures, and the intention of man directs the course of God's graces. "Two things are to be seen," says the author of the *Apostolate of Suffering*, "in a Christian who suffers for an apostolic object—his union with the great Victim, and the exercise of this union for the salvation of souls. By the first he is sanctified; by the second he works for the sanctification and salvation of others. By the first Jesus loads you with His graces; by the second He makes you the means of distributing them. Your own union with Jesus Christ will suffice for your own perfection and happiness, but what will it do towards supplying the spiritual wants of your brethren unless you

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endeavour to make them profit by it? If the rich man keeps all his treasures to himself, what good is done to the beggar who stretches out his hand for alms? And so with regard to the treasures of grace and benediction which your Heavenly Spouse has given you because of your close union with Him. Do you wish that sinners, the poorest people in the whole world, should share in the graces you receive, then direct your intention for them. That intention will be a channel, bringing them the grace of conversion which your good works or patiently-borne sorrows have procured for them. If you wish your pains, or works, or sorrows, to become profitable to certain persons, or communities, or nations, take care to direct your intention by saying to God, at least in your heart, 'O God, I offer these pains, these labours and sorrows, for the salvation of souls, and especially for such a one.' It is enough to renew this intention two or three times a day."*

If the field of the whole Church, or of all humanity, should seem to you too vast, if you feel unable to venture on breaking up so much soil and making it fruitful by your little sufferings, then choose a more contracted sphere of action. Is not your own family, for instance, full of thorns and briars? Does not the Spirit of God lead you to work generously in the culture of the ground from which you yourself

* R. P. Lyonnard, *L'Apostolat de la Souffrance*, ch. xxiii.

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have sprung? Alas! are there not sinners at your own fireside, or among the circle of your relations, in need of all the graces that you can gain for them by your patience and the holy use of your afflictions? Mary suffered for the whole human race, Monica suffered for Augustine in particular; if you do not imitate them, at least bless God that you have a mother, a sister, or wife, who is the apostle of your home, who suffers with silence and resignation, pain, grief, weariness, contradiction, and unkindness. Listen to the words of the Religious who introduced devotion to the Agonising Heart of Jesus —"This adversity, this illness, this reverse, this misfortune, this painful separation, is the Cross of Jesus planted in your house. This member of your family who is infirm or sick, is, if he unites his infirmity or sickness to the sufferings of our Saviour, an infirm or sick member of Christ; Jesus Christ Himself is, so to speak, fastened to the Cross in the person of His suffering member. If by a miracle of Omnipotence your house were all at once to be changed into Calvary, if you saw your Divine Redeemer on the Cross, with His pierced Hands and Feet, His thorn-crowned Head, His bleeding Body, would you not look on Him with the greatest respect, and love and compassion? But this sight is in some measure before your eyes if you have amongst you a member of Jesus who is suffering, and suffering like a Christian. Your

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house becomes a Calvary, that sick-bed or death-bed is the Cross, and the one who suffers there represents Jesus, suffering, agonising, and dying. You think it a blessing to have a crucifix in your room or your oratory, but, believe me, a sick or suffering Christian who bears His afflictions with patience and love is a living crucifix. His presence draws down blessings on the house and those who dwell in it, or keeps off the evils which might fall on it because of their sins."*

O Divine Sufferer, adorable Victim on Calvary, multiply the victims of love and grief who willingly offer themselves to share Thine Agonies, or who resign themselves to bear Thy Cross, that they may expiate the faults of their neighbours, may defend society from the thunderbolt of divine vengeance, may bring some hope of salvation to this evil generation, and prepare a glorious triumph for Thy holy Bride the Church. The more tears and longings these hidden martyrs pour out before Thee, the richer will be the seeds of conversion cast into the furrows of ungrateful human nature.

* R. P. Lyonnard, *L'Apostolat de la Souffrance*, ch. xiv.

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CHAPTER III.

ON THE APOSTOLIC USE OF AFFLICTIONS JOINED TO ACTIVE CHARITY.

THE three Apostolates of Action, Prayer, and Suffering, ought to go hand in hand, or rather, to form but one three-fold Apostolate, the different parts of which are sometimes distributed amongst different members of the Church, as in the case of the Religious Orders, and sometimes centred in one individual, as of old in the Head of the Church and in His Apostles, and as now in our Missionaries of the present day. When one element is brought most prominently forward, we must not suppose that the others are not cooperating with it. For example, teaching, preaching, the performance of spiritual or corporal works of mercy, while they compose the Apostolate of Action, also include prayer and suffering, for theologians ascribe to them a merit of impetration and satisfaction. The more perfect the union of these three Apostolates, the greater is the durability, the extent, and the fruitfulness of each. Union increases their life, and gives them the greatest possible power for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

In the first volume of this book, we have shown how the work of the Agonising Heart

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unites prayer and action,* let us now show how it unites action and suffering, and how suffering itself is a kind of call to active benevolence. Father Faber is again our guide, he is writing to prove that the time of affliction is the time for the exercise of charity. "We must aim most at compassion for others when we are suffering most ourselves. This is the way to gain the peculiar graces of suffering. Grace and nature are almost always at cross purposes. So sorrow naturally shuts us up in ourselves, and concentrates us upon itself, while grace forces us to become more considerate because we are suffering, and to go out of ourselves, and to pour out upon others as a libation before God all that tenderness and pity which nature would make us lavish upon ourselves. There is something in diverting ourselves from ourselves when we are in grief, which has a peculiar effect of enlarging the heart and swelling the dimensions of the whole character, and something also so peculiarly pleasing to God, that, when it is done from a supernatural motive and in imitation of our Lord, He seems to recompense it instantly by the most magnificent graces. To sit by the bed-side of a poor invalid, when we are ourselves inwardly prostrated by illness, and our pulses are throbbing, and our head beats all over, and through pain our words a little

* *The Agonising Heart, Salvation of the Dying*, pt. i., sec. ii., ch. v.

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wander, as if we were inattentive; or again, to listen by the hour to the little complaints of a heart ill at ease, while we ourselves are secretly groaning under a still heavier load; or to throw out joy and light by tone, by look, by manner, by smile, over a circle dependent upon us, when uneasy cares are secretly gnawing at our hearts, and comfortless expectations, and perturbing foresights and suspicions are haunting us like ghosts; these are the grand ventures in the commerce of grace. One hour of such work as that is often worth a month of prayer, and who does not know the enormous value of a month of prayer? Moreover, it is the want of this forcible unselfishness which makes sorrow generally so much less sanctifying than Christian principles would lead us to expect. We almost look upon suffering as a sort of dispensation from charity. We deem it to be a time when we may lawfully love ourselves. We are to receive now, rather than give. It is true that sorrow draws us into solitude, but not an uncharitable, selfish solitude. It guides us gently away from the world as a theatre of worldliness, but not from the world as a field of mutual and self-sacrificing love."*

Mourners, who are groaning under a burden of sorrow, seek your consolation in consoling and saving others. By all the love and gratitude

* Faber, *The Foot of the Cross*, ch. iii.

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and honour you owe to the Agonising Heart of Jesus, speak and labour to rescue the dying; go and help the Priest, go and fill his place, for alas! he is too often kept at a distance from the death-bed. Your sufferings will make your efforts successful. Father Lyonnard says on this subject:—

"The life of the mystical Body of Christ, like that of the human body, has an external and an internal action; in each case the object is the diffusion of life through the whole body. The life of the Church is the Blood of Christ, and the source of life is His Sacred Heart. Two channels serve to convey that life through the Body. The first is the Priesthood, to which Jesus has intrusted the deposit of His doctrine and the merits of His Blood, with the mission of transmitting them to men by means of teaching and of the administration of the sacraments. The other channel is invisible; it is formed of holy souls united most closely to Jesus by love and by sorrow, and used by Him as instruments of grace, more particularly in cases which the ordinary ministry of the Priesthood fails to reach. The chief office of these apostles of love and sorrow is to assist the ministrations of the Priest, and to supply their place as far as possible, when from any cause they cannot be had. The most Blessed Virgin Mary is the chief of these apostles. She won the title of Queen of the Apostles, not only by

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instructing the infant Church, but also by offering herself as a sacrifice for souls."*

If we have not sufficient courage to offer our whole selves as a sacrifice, let us at least by our patience make our sufferings a sweet sacrifice, and offer them all to God; and then, according to our circumstances and powers, let us work. All the Associations established in honour of the Agonising Heart of Jesus, at Mende, at Le Mans, at Bourges, at Niort, at Limoges, &c., which make the salvation of the dying the first object of their supplications, esteem the visiting of the sick to be an important means.† Each sets before itself some special secondary end; the Archconfraternity of Jerusalem, which will soon spread over the whole world like a network of love and mercy, makes the consolation of the afflicted the secondary object of its supplications. Cannot we cooperate with it, by distributing some of the excellent books which have been to us in our hours of agony like echoes of the Consoling Angel's voice? Might not the present work lead the afflicted to draw from the Heart of our meek and loving Saviour strength to bear the tribulations of this life?‡ The Confraternity established

* R. P. Lyonnard, *L'Apostolat de la Souffrance*, ch. xvii.

† *The Agonising Heart, Salvation of the Dying*, pt. i., sec. ii., ch. iv.

‡ *Ibid*, ch. xi.

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in the Sanctuary of Notre-Dame du Bon Remède, near Tarascon, makes the secondary object of its supplication, that the Agonising Heart of Jesus would arrest the torrent of evil doctrines which are devastating society, and above all would grant grace to the young to persevere in the practice of religion; these favours it seeks by the intercession of the holy souls in Purgatory, and endeavours to make interest with them by procuring their comfort or deliverance. We know that the Archconfraternity of the Holy Agony at Valfleury prays that by the merits of our Lord's sufferings, the Church may have peace, the Catholic faith be preserved, especially in France, and the judgments of God be removed.

Here is a vast field of active charity open to the afflicted. In the midst of all His anguish in the Garden of Olives, the Heart of our Divine Master opened to embrace all the sorrowful with a special love, to sympathise in all our miseries, to endure all our griefs, to bear all our sicknesses, to soften our woes and raise our hopes.* The afflicted may feel sure that they are following the inspirations of His Sacred Heart in endeavouring to instruct the ignorant, and convert sinners, in visiting the sick and dying, and in consoling their fellow-sufferers. The work they do in their time of sorrow will bring

* *L'Agonie de Jesus*, l. iii., chs. iv., x., et xi., t. l., pp. 249, 334, 345.

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forth fruit, the more plentifully if an humble and earnest prayer pierces through the overhanging clouds to bring down the blessing of God.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE APOSTOLIC USE OF AFFLICTIONS JOINED WITH PRAYER.

Our English author, whose name is dear to devout souls, says truly—"Prayer is not the *whole* of spirituality, neither is it in itself the most solid part of devotion. It wants ulterior processes to make it solid. There are some good men in whom prayer is really the least solid part of their spirituality. There are exercises more interior than prayer, in which the soul learns more of God, and learns it faster. Not that these things can exist without prayer, or will survive its discontinuance; only they are not prayer. Then these men whose almost exclusive spiritual practice is prayer, put themselves upon intimate terms with God, and, especially if their prayer is the prayer of sentiment, acquire a habit of thinking of God and themselves, not of God alone—of God in them rather than of God in Himself. The results of this betray themselves in times of sorrow, and particularly of interior trials. The submission of such men is not instantaneous. They would

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fain talk to God about it, and if they cannot persuade Him, at least let Him persuade them. To this extent He must flatter them. They will accept the Cross directly God and they conjointly agree to put it on self, but not if it is His act done without consulting them. Or, at least, they will satisfy nature by dignifiedly complaining to God of what He has done, and insisting somewhat freely and untimorously on the additional graces by which He is to compensate them for this new burden. In fact, they question the ways of God, and so lose the childlike spirit of sanctity. Men may not *assail* God, even with the impetuosity of their prayers; their business is to adore. Otherwise the gracefulness of submission is gone. The right to more intimate union with God is forfeited. The water of grace in their soul becomes shallow, and their spirit of prayer thin, peevish, vexed, and wailing. All this is because in their prayer they have had the habit of being something before God, instead of nothing. It is melancholy to see how apt spiritual persons are to be impertinent to God. Perhaps the fewness of the Saints is attributable to this."*

Prayer which falls short of perfection still exercises a precious apostolate. We have proved its great efficacy when speaking of the contemplative Orders.† This efficacy is never greater

* Faber, *The Foot of the Cross*, ch. iii.

† *The Agonising Heart, Salvation of the Dying*, pt. i., sec. iii., ch. xiii.

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than when it rises like incense from a heart in the fire of tribulation. The Apostolate of Prayer is not a mere accessory or complement to the Apostolate of Suffering, but one of its vital elements. Prayer directs the aim of our voluntary mortifications and sacrifices, of our resignation and patience, and obtains from God their particular application to some needy soul. Did not Jesus pray for a long time to make His sufferings profit those for whom He offered them? Let us follow His example, praying the more, the more we suffer. "Being in an Agony He prayed the longer" (Luke xxii. 43). And for whom did He pray? Surely for others far more than for Himself.

"The products of grace are not unfrequently the contradictories of nature, even while they are grafted upon them. It would seem as if the natural result of sorrow were to make us selfish, by forcibly occupying us with ourselves, and concentrating our attention upon our sufferings. Yet we know that the proper grace of sorrow is unselfishness. It is as if the very multitude of things we had to bear made large room in our hearts, and caused a leisurely tranquillity there, which enabled us to think of others, and to legislate with the most minute and foreseeing consideration for their comfort. The spirit of intercession is part of the unselfishness which comes from the sanctification of sorrow. Our kindliness towards others takes especially a

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religious and supernatural form, because we are bearing our sorrow in the presence of God, and our whole being is softened by it, and drawn into deeper and more heavenly relations with Him. The spirit of intercession belongs to hearts which are victims, victims voluntarily or involuntarily of God's loving justice. Every Christian who is in sorrow is so far forth a copy of Christ crucified, and the spirit of expiation is an inevitable element in his grace. Moreover, human agents are generally more or less concerned with our griefs, and, for the most part, not innocently or unintentionally so; and our thoughts, in being occupied with ourselves, are necessarily occupied with them. Thus Jesus prayed for His murderers upon the Cross. Thus the Martyrs prayed for their tormentors. Thus, also, to wrong a Saint has generally been the royal road to his choicest prayers. Who can doubt, therefore, and especially in those critical circumstances of the world, and out of the very abysses of the mysteries of redeeming grace, that Mary's soul, the more it was overwhelmed with the waters of bitterness, with all the more quiet intensity poured itself out on others; and, inasmuch as her prayers were her treasures, treasures that could enrich the world far beyond its own suspicion or belief, it would necessarily be in intercession that the largeness and exuberance of her love found vent, especially when this spirit of intercession was at the same time

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the most efficacious reparation to Jesus for the wrongs he had sustained."*

Dear mourners, who read these words, let your love also find vent in fervent prayer for your neighbours. Bestow the riches of your heart on the Church, on your country, on your family, on the young, on the poor and sick, on sinners and the dying, on the soul whom divine justice purifies in the prison of fire. So will our Lord's words be accomplished in your regard—"In your patience you shall possess your souls" (Luke xxi. 19), not only your own souls but those won by your sufferings, your prayers, and good works. If you are still more generous, if you envy the happiness of those voluntary victims who daily make a vow to sacrifice themselves to God for the salvation of the dying,† then offer your life daily for the same end, or for the conversion of some soul in particular. Ask for suffering as for a favour, after the example of so many generous disciples of Jesus Christ, who have placed themselves as victims ready to suffer everything, even death itself, if only they may console the Man of Sorrows in His Agony, may turn away His anger from us, may ensure triumph to His Church and liberty to His Vicar, may keep

* Faber, *The Foot of the Cross*, ch. viii.

† Details regarding these Nuns and their vow of immolation will be found in *The Agonising Heart, Salvation of the Dying*, pt. i., sec. iii.

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faith alive in Christendom, may guard our youth from the contagion of vice, and bring the old and the dying to the Haven of Safety.

And now come and water the bitter root of your sorrow for nine days together, with reading, prayer, and meditation, that it may send forth a vigorous shoot and bear these precious fruits. No time is better fitted for exercises of piety than the time of sorrow (James v. 13). In the course of the day make the spiritual reading assigned; in the evening read the meditation, the practice and example which follow, and let them form the subject of your mental prayer the next morning. If you have not time or quiet at home, go and visit the Son of God in His sanctuary, and make your prayer there before His altar. Say some of the prayers at the end of this volume, and, if possible, hear Holy Mass in union with the Agonies of the Divine Heart, or perform the Devotion of the Holy Hour for those in their Agony.

Where can you better find consolation for your own agonies than in meditating on the Agonies of God and assuaging the agonies of men? Are not the examples of the Saints enough to transfigure suffering, by showing you that it is a sign of our Lord's love for your soul, and by teaching you to bear it as they did in union with the Divine Victim?

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NOVENA OR OCTAVE.

FIRST DAY.

THE ABASEMENT OF LIFE.

Spiritual Reading.

AGONY is the abasement of life. When the Word of God took on Himself our human nature, He abased His divine nature; when He submitted to suffering and death, He abased His state of glory and of immortality; when He took the load of our sins upon Him, He lowered His dignity of Saint of Saints. These three abasements of nature, of condition, and of office or dignity, caused bitter and hidden sorrows to the Heart of the God-Man from the time of His Incarnation to His Death. Does not affliction often reduce us to an agony, in which our life is brought low?

Meditation.

I. Consider how low the divine nature was brought when the Word was made Flesh; He seemed merely to have the life of a little child. And we, poor human beings, are always wishing

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to rise, we are constantly striving to gain a higher position than the one our talents fit us to occupy. Is not disappointed ambition often the cause of our sorrow and bitterness, of our discouragement and despair? We see some rival outstrip us in the race; we feel our life going from us, our health failing, our strength lessening, our faculties becoming dim, and immediately our soul is overwhelmed with vexation. Alas! we are not like the Incarnate Word. He emptied Himself for the love of man, and we are unwilling to be emptied of self for the love of God. When shall we be united to Jesus by abasements as well as by sentiments, by humiliations as well as by humility, so as to say I live, now not I, but the Agonising Heart of Jesus lives and throbs in my heart?

II. Consider how the condition of the Son of God was lowered. Even when He became Man, He might have been glorious and immortal, as He was after His Resurrection; but He chose to suffer and die, like us, and for us. And I thirst for glory and immortality, I wish for a long life amidst the honours and pleasures of the world. I wish to rise above the station of my parents, I wish to distinguish myself, to attract attention. Does not the downfal of my hopes bring tears to my eyes, cast me into agony, make my prayers full of self-interest, and lead me to murmur at God's dealings towards me? I work and labour to gain position, to

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make a figure in the world, to attain an important place; I am swayed by the blind prejudices of my cotemporaries, by my own vanity and self-interest. O Word of God, reduced to the form of a servant, teach me that every condition is honourable in which God is served.

III. Consider the Saint of Saints descending to the position of a sinner, and offering Himself to the justice of God as a Victim of expiation for our faults. How much His reputation suffered! How much it still suffers! And I would be esteemed better than I am, I would pass for a virtuous and holy person; I cannot bear to remain hidden in the crowd; it irritates me to be classed with the common run of Christians. I am angry if I am unjustly accused, I rise up at the very thought of being called a malefactor (John xviii. 30) or wicked (Mark xv. 28), as Jesus was. Not only do I refuse to expiate the faults of another, but I shrink from suffering and humiliation on any terms. This is the cause of my fears, my aversions, my griefs and agonies. O Jesus, always suffering and lowly, bring down my lofty thoughts, dispel my illusions, rectify my will that I may learn to bless my sorrows and pains!

Practice.

Invoke the Agonising Heart of Jesus and the compassionate Heart of Mary. Visit some sick or infirm person, some poor man in his humble

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dwelling, or some captive in his prison, with the intention of gaining graces for those who are this day in their agony. Above all, visit the Son of God Himself, a Prisoner in the tabernacle in the Sacrament of His Love, which renews the lowliness of His life; and pray to Him for the afflicted, especially for such as are bowed down under the burden of hatred, contempt, and unjust accusations.

Example.

St. John of the Cross had to bear this burden of hatred, contempt, and unjust accusations, during the dreadful imprisonment which brought his life, his honour, and his office so low. He had espoused the cause of the reform introduced by St. Teresa into the Carmelite Order. The Carmelites who were opposed to it seized on him and brought him by force, on the 4th of December, 1577, to their monastery at Toledo. We quote his biographer's words—

"Father John of the Cross, who was to carry out in his life the name he bore, was confined in a very narrow prison. It was a cell, six feet wide and ten feet long. It joined a wardrobe used by the strangers who were received in the convent. The only window was about three fingers wide, and looked on a corridor. It admitted so little light that in order to read his breviary he was obliged to get upon a bench, and even then could only see at the hours when

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the sun shone on the corridor. They took credit to themselves for giving him a bed like those used in the reformed monasteries. It consisted of two or three boards and a covering. The food was in keeping with the lodging; it was bread and water, with a few sardines. If any other kind of fish were added, it was done secretly, for he was treated in all respects like a criminal worthy of the heaviest punishments. Every Friday he was obliged to appear in the common refectory, and take a meal of bread and water on the floor; after which he received from each of the Brethren so severe a discipline that his shoulders bore the marks of it for many years.

"While the weather was cool the prisoner found his dungeon comparatively endurable, but when the Spanish summer set in, his sufferings from heat and bad air were so great that it seems a wonder that he lived. It would have been but a small favour to let him change his clothing occasionally, but even this alleviation was denied him. He became so feeble and emaciated that he could hardly stand. His Superior visited him from time to time, but his visits did not tend to console the poor prisoner. Having one day entered his miserable chamber, the Superior found him prostrate and in prayer. The Saint, thinking it was the gaoler, and being so reduced that he could hardly move, remained in the same position. His visitor, irritated by

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this apparent want of respect, pushed him with his foot, and asked him why he did not condescend to rise when he did him the honour to visit him. Father John of the Cross, instead of answering, as one less humble might have done, that such favours were only an additional cause of suffering, begged the Superior's pardon. 'And what were you thinking of?' said the Prior, roughly, 'for you were absorbed in something.' 'I was thinking,' he replied, 'that to-morrow is the Feast of the Blessed Virgin, and that it would be a great comfort to me to be able to celebrate the Divine Mysteries.' 'Not in my time,' said the Prior; and went away, leaving the servant of Christ in great grief at his inability to say or to hear Mass on that solemn day.

"After John of the Cross had spent nine long months in prison, the Blessed Virgin appeared to him and told him to escape, and soon afterwards showed him in a vision all the places through which he was to pass. He made up his mind to go away by night, paid the gaoler what he owed him, asked his pardon for the trouble he caused him, and gave him a beautiful crucifix which he had been in the habit of wearing on his heart, and which he said he had received from a very holy person. The next morning the Carmelites of the Mitigated Observance went about the town seeking for their victim, but he was hidden beneath the

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wings of One Who brings to nought the projects which He has not inspired."*

O God, even when I am a prisoner on a sick-bed, or when my strength fails and I am in a helpless state, I am never humiliated and ill-treated like this holy Religious, and yet I have offended Thee a thousand times more than he did! His patience puts me to shame, and his conformity to his Divine Master makes me wish also to go to the school of the Word made Flesh, that I may learn to be resigned amidst all the afflictions of this life. O Agonising Heart of Jesus, be my light and my strength, be my only consolation, and my refuge from myself!

SECOND DAY.

THE AGONY OF THE HEART.

Spiritual Reading.

SORROW reached every part of the Soul of Jesus. During His whole life His Heart was in Agony, His Soul suffered martyrdom, He was crucified by an interior crucifixion. His mental sufferings were incomparably greater than His bodily sufferings; they reached their climax in the Garden of Olives.

* Collet, *La Vie de Saint Jean de la Croix*, l. ii., nn. vi., vii.

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Meditation.

I. The sufferings of the Agonising Heart of Jesus were universal. Our Lord suffered in every part of His Soul, and He suffered every kind of grief; that part of the soul which is the seat of desire was afflicted by sadness, the irascible part by fear, the understanding by the suspension of every effect of the beatific vision, and by the influx of every kind of grief. He suffered in His honour, in His affections, in His Mother, and in His Disciples. But interior sufferings are those which we specially shrink from, to which we have most difficulty in resigning ourselves. As soon as we have begun to feel contrition, we turn away from the sight of our faults, and think it time to make an end of reflections which might perpetuate or deepen our penitence. We have a great dread of trials which are hidden from the world, which are often misunderstood, which are laughed at by our superiors, and in which God is the only consolation. When they come near us, how we hurry out of the way, how we run from creature to creature, begging for some comfort or alleviation! How little have we of the spirit of Jesus, Who rejoiced when suffering met Him on every side! We consent to suffer in one faculty, but we shrink from suffering in all. Again, when the least suffering comes, our memory, our imagination, our understanding, and our will, all help

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each other to bear it; painful anticipations and sad memories are driven away by images of happiness, by comforting arguments, by gentle affections, our bodily senses also do their part in amusing and consoling us. The suffering of Jesus was universal. At least in our partial suffering let us imitate His patience and resignation.

II. The sufferings of the Agonising Heart of Jesus were violent. Our Saviour, during His mortal life, kept His Soul in a state of beatitude which was denied to His Body, but though His Soul enjoyed this constant vision of God, Its sufferings were intense. No sufferings in the world are equal to those of the Heart of Jesus. Nevertheless, in our troubles we are ready to think that no one has ever suffered so much as we, and our constant desire is for relief. We exaggerate what we have to bear, that we may justify our complaints, and we make light of the case of others, that we may be excused from showing them compassion. Interior anguish, spiritual pains, troubled the soul of the God-Man as storms trouble the ocean; and I am always afraid of having to bear too much. Jesus wrought miracles that He might suffer more; I sin that I may suffer less. O Good Master, let me be buried with Thee in the healing waters of sorrow; let me sink into the abyss of tribulation! If only I remain united to Thy Agonising Heart, I can never perish, and the

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afflictions which bring me lowest will raise me highest, and bear me most swiftly to the haven.

III. The sufferings of the Agonising Heart of Jesus were long. The actual sufferings of His Body lasted only a few hours; but He felt them by His divine foreknowledge throughout His whole life. This anticipation was one of the interior sufferings which made His life one agony, one uninterrupted martyrdom. And we, His disciples, would have short troubles in this world, as well as in the next. We use every means, we betake ourselves to prayer and to Communion to shorten them. If sometimes we do suffer with Christian patience, our motive is not zeal or self-devotion, we have no apostolic end in view; we do it merely from self-interest and spiritual ambition, that we may get out of Purgatory the sooner, or win a higher place in Heaven. But Jesus suffered always, and purely for His Father's honour and our salvation. Oh, that I could imitate His love and His intention! Give me grace to suffer always for the good of souls and simply for Thy love, my God, my Saviour, and my Father!

Practice.

Invoke the Agonising Heart of Jesus and the compassionate Heart of Mary for yourself. Pray for those who are bearing mystic pains and interior trials, and those who exaggerate

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their real afflictions. For the intention of those now in their agony, try to spread the Devotion to the Agonies of the Heart of Jesus, either by making it known, praying for its progress, or enlisting ten Associates. Lead souls in deep sorrow to adopt this Devotion, that they may gain strength and patience, and become generous and apostolic.

Example.

Most of the fervent disciples of Christ have to undergo agony of the heart; it comes alike on the humble servant and the zealous Priest. We have examples of this truth in the good Armelle, a poor girl of Brittany, and in M. Olier, the illustrious Founder of St. Sulpice.

"To suffer for love is better than to enjoy love;"* such were the remarkable words of the good Armelle. She suffered, and by degrees she felt as if she was forsaken by our Lord, Who no longer granted her sensible grace. Her great fervour was gone, she lost even the remembrance of the favours God had bestowed on her. Her love of virtue grew so weak, that it seemed as if she had never had any. Even worse, her heart was filled with a flame as from hell, and her mind with abominable thoughts; her imagination was haunted by the most dreadful images that hell could suggest. It

* *La Vie Merveilleuse d'Armelle Nicolas*, par Jeanne de la Nativité, l. i., ch. xxviii., n. 4.

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would be impossible to describe her anguish and bitterness; the very remembrance made her hair stand on end. She was constantly overwhelmed with sadness, and shed plenteous tears. For two years she was never visited by any thought of God, or for God, which gave her the least comfort. On the contrary, everything that could increase her torment was constantly before her mind. One heavy cross was, that for these two years she found no one to whom she could open her mind, or manifest the sad state of her soul; the more helpless she felt, the more firmly was she convinced of her own reprobation, which at last seemed to her quite certain.*

M. Olier describes his long agony: "My spirit was enveloped in such darkness, that I could not remember anything; I could not learn anything. The confusion and darkness of my mind were such that I saw nothing. I knew not even what I said; I was like a deaf person, for though I heard people speak, I understood nothing and retained nothing; I could not express any idea, even about things which I had formerly understood. My mother, seeing me in this condition, used to say, 'You would think he has become an idiot.' I could not help it; I thought I was for ever reduced to this state, and often I offered myself willingly to

* *La Vie Merveilleuse d'Armelle Nicolas*, par Jeanne de la Nativité, l. i., ch. viii., n. 5—10.

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God, to lose my mind, if He would have it so, and to become a fool.

"I was without God as far as my feelings went, but I was full of movements of pride and self-love, human respect seemed to surround me, fear took possession of me, I was constantly wondering what the world thought of me—if it considered me ignorant and imbecile, without piety, charity, or patience. I could not feel anything else, or get rid of these thoughts. These feelings of pride and human respect were a continual torment to me, for it seemed to me that I consented to them. When I heard confessions, I had nothing to say to the penitents; I seemed to be forsaken like a poor reprobate. I could not preach, for I did not know what to say, thoughts and words were gone. Holy Scripture seemed everywhere to condemn me. The passages which speak of Judas were always before me; I was haunted by a comparison between myself and the traitor, which overwhelmed my heart with sorrow. Above all, I was harassed with scruples which caused me as much suffering as my other trials. If I heard any one speak of the signs of reprobation, I saw them all in myself. When God was spoken of, I could only imagine Him as an angry, harsh, and cruel Being, and the remembrance of Him was grievous to me. Although I was very diligent in prayer, nothing was given to me, not a feeling or a ray of light.

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I felt nothing but clouds, darkness, dryness, and inability to raise myself up to God, and this to such a degree that I did not dare even to remain in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. All my former experiences seemed to be illusions, there was no kind of comfort for me, no sign that God loved me, and this was my greatest martyrdom.

"To these interior sufferings were added others; good people would have nothing to do with me—everybody, relations, friends, servants, great and small despised me. I was the talk of all Paris.

"It was decided that I should be forbidden to exercise any external ministry, to preach, or give conferences, or the like. I was only allowed to hear confessions in cases of absolute necessity. My sufferings were set down to weakness of mind; my colleagues became more and more settled in this opinion, and let others think the worst of me without offering any excuse. As our Lord had deprived me of His accustomed help, the devil played with my weakness, making me appear useless in God's service, and ridiculous in the eyes of my Superior. I remember a little word which he said once, 'As for you, go away wherever you like, we have no use for you.'

"O my Master, I could bear these trials, all except being repelled and scorned by Thee. Hell, with all its pains, is less terrible to me

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than this. Nothing on earth can be fair or sweet to a soul that knows it is deprived of Thy love; but how can anything afflict a soul which knows itself to be loved by Thee?"*

THIRD DAY.

WHY SHOULD WE SUFFER?

Spiritual Reading.

THE objects for which our Lord suffered may be classed under four heads—to prove His humanity, to complete our redemption, to make an exchange of His strength for our weakness, and to alleviate our miseries. He felt His sufferings acutely, and by multiplying them multiplied graces and succours for us. He clothed Himself with our infirmities that He might clothe us with His courage, as He suffered that we might suffer less and have greater hope.

Meditation.

I. Why should we suffer? To develope our power of feeling. Suffering is so good a way of proving the love that we bear to God or to man, that our Lord was made Flesh in order to suffer. He would willingly come down again from Heaven and feel our griefs, if His

* Faillon, *Vie de M. Olier*, pt. i., l. vii., nn. 3, 8.

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Heavenly Father consented. What a privilege it is to be able to suffer. The love the Angels bear to the Son of God makes them envy us this power. But sensibility is a germ which must be developed, and it can only be developed by trials borne with Christian patience and pious resignation. Alas! our selfish sensibility breaks forth in murmuring and impatience, and a thousand efforts to escape from harm. We do not cultivate the charitable kind of sensibility which makes us ready to compassionate the afflictions of others, to work and to suffer for them.

Why should we suffer? To complete the work of redemption. The Heart of Jesus suffers to expiate the sins of our hearts. Is it not meet that we should be punished in that by which we have sinned? That we should expiate our spiritual thoughts by painful memories, by still more painful anticipations, by doubts and uncertainties of the will, by gloomy visions, by revulsions and inward struggles? Jesus suffered these things that the satisfaction He offered for us might be more abundant; the Saints were willing to suffer, to increase the merits by which they satisfied for themselves and for others. Are we the disciples of Jesus? Are we the children of the Saints?

II. Why should we suffer? To diminish the sufferings of others. The God-Man suffered that we might suffer the less. He was pleased

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to take on Himself a large share of our miseries. Are not the members united to the Head? Are not they united to each other? If we more generously accepted the sufferings which come upon us, other members of Christ's Body would suffer less. A certain amount of suffering is imposed upon the world as the punishment of sin; the more we take the less is left for others. Perhaps we already do something every day by prayers, or words, or actions, to lessen the ills of our brethren; let us add to these means that one other of which the Agonising Heart shows the example—patient suffering.

Why should we suffer? That hope may be sustained and strengthened. The Saviour knew how few men would be the better for His Agony, and yet He despaired not of the goodness of God nor of human nature. He went on along the royal way of the Cross, and made His very sorrows the immovable foundation of our hopes. Have we the second theological virtue? Do we preserve it in the midst of public and private troubles? What efforts do we make to practise it? Faith is the result of a victory over nature; the exercise of charity involves a constant combat. Do we suppose that we can always have hope without struggling against self? Affliction estimated by faith, and accepted by love, helps us mightily in this struggle and strengthens our hopes; it shows us that we are specially dear to God, since He treats us as He

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treated Jesus and Mary. Do we accept it as a token of favour?

III. Why should we suffer? To be more like our Divine Example, Who chose suffering for Himself. He has put the same desire into the hearts of His Disciples, and the Saints have imitated Him, and have been insatiable in their longing for suffering. But we always think we have more than our share, more than we can endure. We would gladly suffer less, though we should then be less like Jesus. O Lord, give me more patience, not less suffering!

Why should we suffer? To practise the virtue of humility, after the example of the Word made Flesh. No special grace enabled Him to meet death unmoved or to be insensible to torment; such a thing might have been extraordinary in men's eyes, but it would not have rendered Him more pleasing to God. He chose even to appear weak to the devil, that he might venture to despise and persecute Him. But if we could, we would dazzle men's eyes by our grandeur and strength, so that at least we should be feared, if not respected. We find it hard to resign ourselves to certain exterior defects, which may bring humiliation and contempt upon us from man, though they do not cause God to look upon us with less favour. Affliction, instead of making us realise our own weakness and nothingness, rather makes us more exacting towards others. When some

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little thing is the matter, we want every one to attend to us, to visit us, to console and encourage us, and we complain bitterly of the least want of care or consideration. O Jesus, meek and lowly of heart even in the midst of Thine Agonies, teach us to be gentle and humble in sorrow.

Practice.

Invoke the Agonising Heart of Jesus and the compassionate Heart of Mary for yourself. Practise some bodily mortification for the benefit of those who are in their agony to-day, and offer for them the principal sufferings of the day. Multiply your good works, and let your own sorrows incite you to fresh efforts for the poor souls in Purgatory, and for the sufferers in this world who are most like them.

Example.

Holy souls have sometimes to bear sufferings not only like those of the captives in Purgatory, but even like those of the lost. Therefore we should not always attribute our sufferings to our sins, but rather to the love of our Heavenly Father, Who would make us like His Agonising Son, that we may be of the greater use to His Church.

Rose of Lima was the first flower of sanctity put forth by the Church in South America. She was only five years old when she made a per-

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petual vow of virginity. All her life was passed in perfect innocence and admirable fervour. Nevertheless, the Roman Breviary tells us that, for several hours each day during a period of fifteen years, she was subject to the most painful desolation and dryness of spirit; she bore with courage agonies more bitter than any kind of death.* Often she felt as if she were in hell, or at least in Purgatory. She had no recollection of God, no feeling of His presence, and no shadow of consolation. There was nothing but darkness, languor, and helplessness; her mind was unable to grasp supernatural or even natural objects. She seemed no longer to love God nor even to know Him. He was a stranger to her; He seemed to have gone away and left no trace of Himself among His creatures. Her soul was weighed down with terror and anguish, and she saw no way of escape from her dreadful situation, which seemed likely to last for ever. It was the pain of loss, and custom made it no easier, but rather more severe. Rose vainly prayed her Divine Spouse to remove this chalice of bitterness from her; she could but say, as He had done—"Father, not my will but Thine be done" (Luke xxii. 42). None of the Confessors to whom she applied could understand or alleviate her wretchedness. Her mother, perceiving that she sometimes grew pale, trembled, and was covered with a cold

* Roman Breviary, 30th of August.

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and death-like sweat, put her into the hands of doctors, who caused her useless tortures by the remedies they tried. She would have found it easier to be consumed by flames, for that would only have been the pain of sense, whereas she suffered the pain of loss, as if she had been condemned at the last Judgment or cast into the depths of hell. The holy Virgin might truly say with the Psalmist—"The sorrows of death surrounded me" (Ps. xvii. 5), for only the Divine Power which caused her sufferings could have supported her under them.*

In the *Example* for the seventh day we shall see another servant of God who had to suffer the pain of sense.

The innocence of St. Rose of Lima did not exempt her from the troubles of this life; on the contrary, she had a large share, because her very innocence fitted her above others to glorify God and to promote the salvation of souls. She learned to suffer before she learned to speak; her earliest years were an apprenticeship to death and martyrdom, rather than to life and happiness; her mother and grandmother could not agree about her name, and whether she answered to Isabella or Rose she was beaten. Her devotion, her silence, her modesty, and love of solitude, as well as her vigils, drew down upon her not merely reproaches and

* Hansen, *Vita mirabilis Rosæ de S. Maria Limensis*, cap. xiii.

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hard words, but kicks and blows. When the remarkable character of her life, her visions, abstinences, and superhuman austerities were known by the rest of the household, they feared that she would be denounced to the Inquisition as a sacrilegious person or a hypocrite, and threats and indignities were her daily portion. Even her mother did not hesitate publicly to accuse her of hypocrisy, dissimulation, and wickedness. Many of her Confessors tried to persuade her that she was in a wrong way, that she was a victim of illusions, and that her sufferings proceeded from weakness and a disordered brain. For three years she was confined to her bed suffering fearfully from contraction of the nerves, but no groan or complaint escaped her lips. She had often pains in her throat, her chest, her limbs, and stomach; gout, pleurisy, and other maladies of opposite natures seized her at the same time and threw her into convulsions. None of the remedies prescribed were of the slightest use. Rose was always tranquil, calm, and serene; she always said she was well, and that everything was sweet as honey to her, because everything came from her Divine Spouse. She often turned to Him saying—"O Lord, increase my sufferings, provided my love may be increased."

Rose considered these sufferings the greatest favours, and she thought herself the most ungrateful of creatures because she did not

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know how to love or thank God enough for them. She died in the thirty-first year of her age, after a most fearful and inexplicable illness, during which she used to ask God to increase her pains, that she might be more ripe for Heaven. When we are in affliction, let us echo the cry of this sublime soul:—

"Yet more, Lord, yet more! Fill up the measure, heap sorrow on sorrow, let Thy holy and adorable will be done, only at the same time increase my patience. Blessed be the troubles which prove to me the abundance of Thy mercies."*

FOURTH DAY.

HOW TO SUFFER.

Spiritual Reading.

In all His Agonies our Saviour suffered innocently, meritoriously, and freely. No sin of His own caused His griefs. They were infinitely meritorious, not only because of the dignity of His Divine Person, but because of His unalterable patience, His entire resignation, and His immense love of God and of our souls. He might have saved us without suffering, and though He accepted affliction in obedience,

* Hansen, *Vita mirabilis Rosæ de S. Marea Limensis*, capp. xvii., xxviii., xixx.

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and embraced it by His offering of Himself, it was by His own free will that He did so, in order to be a more perfect model for our imitation.

Meditation.

I. The Agonising Heart of Jesus suffered innocently. No sin in Him, either original or actual, had any share in the cause or object of His afflictions, or in the way in which He bore them. This same innocence is reflected in the sufferings of His Mother, immaculate in her conception, spotless in her life. But we, alas! are born to an inheritance of suffering and of sin; through life we make our state worse by our many faults. More or less directly our sorrows proceed from an impure source, and as they flow on they can only be cleansed by the exercise of charity towards God and our neighbour. If we were full of love, like Jesus and Mary, we should suffer innocently, as they did. But when suffering comes to us, whether from Heaven or from earth, we smother the little flame of love in our hearts by tears and murmurs and complaints. We should rather try to keep it alive, by patience, by a sincere conversion, by fresh fervour, and holy joy. Is it not better to suffer being innocent than being guilty? Is it not better to suffer like the Saviour than like the bad thief, or even the good one?

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II. The Agonising Heart of Jesus suffered meritoriously. Sometimes our dear Lord suffered with calmness, like the Priest in the action of sacrifice paying homage to God; sometimes He suffered with trouble, repugnance, and fear, like the victim led to the altar, which anticipates the moment of immolation with alarm and mortal anguish. But the slightest shade of an imperfection never dimmed his merits; they were always increased by love, by the most pure and burning love. When men persecute us, when our heart is rent with interior sorrow, we do not imitate the respectful quietness of the Priest nor the holy resignation of the trembling victim. Grief, which might forward the work of our salvation and perfection, which might raise our eternal throne many degrees higher, becomes a new cause of condemnation, and puts us in danger of a lower place in hell. So little do we value the grace of suffering, so little do we profit by it to increase our merits, that we even attribute our sins to our trials. We say—"I should be better if I had less to suffer." O Sacred Heart, Victim and Mirror of love and of sorrow, let Thy love shine upon me, that, seeing Thee, my illusions may be dispelled and I may be closely united to Thee. Do not let my troubles here tend to increase my eternal punishment, but give me grace to make use of them in the exercise of an apostolate like

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Thine upon earth, and in gaining more merit for Heaven.

III. The Agonising Heart of Jesus suffered freely. He wished for suffering, He sought to be commanded to suffer. If the Son of God had not been willing to suffer He would never have suffered, for He was Master of His own Soul and Body as well as of every created thing; nothing but His will was needed to keep affliction for ever at a distance. Of His own free will He opened the way for suffering to enter into His loving Heart. But which of us wishes for sickness, or infirmity, or bodily sufferings? Above all, who wishes for interior sufferings, for anguish, and agony of soul, and martyrdom of the heart? Who wishes for trouble and weariness? Who wishes for fear, sadness, and depression? Do I go forth, like my Master, to meet sorrow? Do I ask for suffering with all my heart? Alas! when I see it coming, instead of waiting to welcome it, I draw back, I flee from it, I go out of the way that it may not meet me. It must seize me by main force, and even then I hardly make a virtue of necessity. Poor heart, when will you give up all these efforts to escape? When will you cheerfully receive your guest? What a long way you have to go before you reach the Heart of God by your patience and generosity?

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Practice.

Invoke the Agonising Heart of Jesus and the compassionate Heart of Mary for yourself. Pray especially for those who are bearing interior and mystic sorrows, and for those who are unjustly accused and persecuted. For the intention of those now in their agony, teach others resignation, conformity, and union with Jesus Christ in their sufferings. In the morning make this short prayer: "My God, let Thy adorable will be done upon me, in me, by me, in regard of all that concerns me, now, every moment of this day and of my whole life, at my death, and through all eternity." In the evening say to our Lord: "My God, I know not if Thou art satisfied with me; I have many reasons to think Thou canst not be. But I am entirely satisfied with Thee. It matters little to Thee whether I am or not; but it is the best praise I can give Thee, since God alone can satisfy me, and it proves that Thou alone art my God."

Example.

Holy souls have always been found in every rank of Christian society reproducing the image of their Divine Master, and teaching us how to suffer.

St. Mary-Frances of the Five Wounds of Jesus, a poor and lowly girl, was born at

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Naples, March 25, 1715. When she asked permission to take the habit of St. Peter of Alcantara, she was cruelly beaten by her father. She did not seek to escape or to ward off the blows, but remained motionless, rejoicing that she could offer to her Heavenly Bridegroom as first-fruits of her love the ill-usage of this blind and selfish man, who rejected the honour of entering into an alliance with the King of Kings by giving Him his daughter. The avarice of the miserable man was not satisfied by the hard work imposed on his poor child, but, perceiving that God had bestowed on her the gift of prophecy, he wished to turn it to gain, and desired her to go to a certain noble lady and tell her if the child she expected would be a son. The young girl refused, and was beaten with such severity that she would have died had not some relations rescued her from her unnatural parent. Reproaches and threats were her constant portion, but Mary-Frances never showed the least impatience, she forgave all. The death of her mother brought fresh persecution from her father, who was anxious to marry again, and therefore left the whole care of the family to her, and obliged her to work for the support of all his children. Public humiliation was not wanting, as, for seven whole years, one of her Confessors, wishing to try her, did everything to make her ridiculous and contemptible to others. Her life was a constant

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martyrdom from infirmities and illnesses. She not only prayed God to bless those who persecuted her, but offered to suffer for others all their share of sickness, pain, and trouble. This offering was more than once accepted, and she suffered the pains which her father would have had to bear in Purgatory.*

The life of Marie-Clotilde of France, Queen of Sardinia, and sister of the unfortunate Louis XVI., was an uninterrupted series of crosses, borne with admirable courage and rare conformity to the will of God. She had, to use her own words, ascended the throne as if it were a Calvary, and she deemed it an honour to be fastened to the Cross of Jesus Christ. Some sad news arrived a short time before one of the great solemnities of the Church. "I expected it," she said, "since such a Feast is near. God wishes us to remember Him, and to offer Him a sacrifice, and He is good enough Himself to provide the material." The sensibility of her heart was so great that she was often unable to restrain her tears, and she used to accuse herself of this as an imperfection. "If I had more resignation, instead of weeping I should be full of joy and gratitude that I am allowed to suffer like my adorable Master. These constant tears prevent my doing all I ought to comfort and help my royal and

* Laviosa, *Vita della Beata Maria-Francesca delle Cinque Piaghe*, capp. 3, 6, 8, 9, 11.

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unfortunate husband. Pray for me, then, that our Lord would take from me these too ready tears; ask Him that my sufferings may not appear externally. Nevertheless, O my God, let Thy will be done, not mine! I would fain rejoice as I ought in my afflictions, since they are the gifts of God. I always will accept the crosses our Lord may send me, praying Him to unite my tears to the drops of His Sweat of Blood."*

When Marie-Clotilde heard that her brother, the King of France, had died on the scaffold, she only said—"God forgive N." Those who had brought him to this undeserved end were mentioned, and she said—"As for me, I forgive them; may God do the same. We must pray Him to enlighten them."† On a certain occasion she was obliged to receive one of the regicides. Distrustful of her own strength, she prepared for this trial by Communion and prayer, and asked others also to pray. God heard her. When the regicide came into her presence he was so struck that he could not speak a word. The Queen was the first to break the silence, and her gentleness and generosity restored his presence of mind, so that he was able to explain the mission with which the French Republic had intrusted him.‡ Marie-Clotilde was devotedly

* Bottiglia, *Vita della V. Maria Clotilde*, pt. ii., cap. xiv.

† *Ibid.*, cap. x. ‡ *Ibid.*, pt. i., cap. vii.

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attached to her sister, Madame Elizabeth, whom she had almost brought up, and in whose religious instruction she had taken much pains. When the Court of Turin heard of this innocent victim's death on the scaffold, Charles Emmanuel came to her room with a crucifix in his hand, and said—"You must make a great sacrifice to God." She raised her eyes to Heaven, adored the incomprehensible decrees of Providence, and answered, with perfect resignation—"The sacrifice is made." Nevertheless, when the terrible news was told she fainted away. When she recovered she wished to sit down to table with the royal family, and did her best to hide her grief, so that all who saw her were deeply touched and edified. In the evening the Queen went on foot in a public procession. She did not weep, though all who saw her were in tears, but she prayed most fervently, and recommended the soul of her dear Elizabeth to the Priests of the different churches she visited. When the procession was over her strength failed her; they had to carry her into the palace and to her bed. She did not even speak harshly of the murderers, and only mentioned her sister to praise her virtues.*

This great servant of God gained many precious favours for her family, and especially for her husband, by her apostolate of suffering. She said to him—"As soon as I am in Heaven

* Bottiglia, *Vita della V. Maria Clotilde*, pt. i., cap. viii.

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you will see that I am a mother to you;" and is it not true that the sufferings she bore with such patience brought this Prince to the Religious life? Marie-Clotilde died at Naples, on the 7th of March, 1802, after being driven from her kingdom. On the 4th of June in the same year, Charles Emmanuel IV., abdicated, and on the 11th of January, 1815, he entered the Society of Jesus, which had just been restored, and he died a good death at Rome, on the 7th of October, 1819.

FIFTH DAY.

TEMPTATIONS.

Spiritual Reading.

JESUS was pleased to be tempted. He was tempted in the wilderness, in Gethsemani, and on Calvary. The action of the infernal powers was one cause of His interior sufferings. He knew all the temptations to which we are subject, He knew the agony they would cause to the just, He saw that moral suffering itself would bring temptation to many. Therefore He said to His Apostles, "Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. xxvi. 41).

Meditation.

I. Consider that the Son of God was not exempt from temptation. The first Adam was

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tempted in Paradise, the second Adam was tempted in the wilderness, and in the Garden of Olives. And we, children of the one, and disciples of the other, wonder that we are tempted at all times and in all places. If we are wearied and disquieted, and cast down by these repeated temptations, is it not because we are in the habit of yielding to them, and that therefore Satan, the world, and the flesh, treat us as their bond-slaves? The example of our Divine Master teaches us not to give up the good we have begun for the storms which assail us in performing it. But we are turned by every wind, like the weather-cock on the roof; and our cry when we feel the force of the breath of God shows that our heart is rusted with sloth and selfishness. We begin some good work for the assistance of our neighbour, but when a difficulty meets us, we are ready to give it up. When our first ardour is spent, we see nothing but obstacles, we are discouraged at the first check. In the affair of our own personal perfection, we are tempted to look back a thousand times. Do we then redouble our vigilance and our prayers, like Jesus in His Agony? Do we resist the weakness of the flesh by mortifications? Do we keep up our fervour by meditation on God's word? A long prayer, like that of our Saviour in His Agony, would raise us up, and preserve us, would win for us grace to persevere, and

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bring to a good end the work we have taken in hand.

II. Consider that our Lord never gave temptation any hold on Him. He was often tempted, but His temptations were never the result of a past fault or a present imprudence. Alas! how often we seek temptation, and bring it upon ourselves. By imprudence in look or speech, in our choice of society, in our walks, in our reading, and even in our dress and demeanour, we daily make it easy for the enemy to tempt us, while we also weaken or diminish the grace which God gives us to resist him. And yet grace never fails us, we might always triumph over temptation, we might even make it a source of immense spiritual gain. Do we turn it to account to gain humility, to quicken our fervour? Do we make it an opportunity of exciting our confidence in God, of hiding ourselves in the Bosom of our Heavenly Father as a frightened child hides itself in its mother's bosom? Do we rejoice like the Apostle who abounded with joy in all his tribulation? (2 Cor. vii. 4.) Ought not temptations to fill us with joy, since they show us that the devil is not in quiet possession of our soul? They teach us to know ourselves, they make us more circumspect, they increase our merits, and make us pleasing to God, even while He seems to treat us hardly. Do I look upon my temptations in this light? Do I con-

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sider temptation as a preparation which is to make my soul holier and more apostolic, more pleasing to God, and more useful to man?

III. Consider that it was after the Last Supper, and after the institution of the Adorable Sacrament of the Altar, that Jesus in His Agony was tempted by the devil. The enemy of God and man is enraged at the sight of the Blessed Eucharist. It increases his fury, and takes away his strength. Let us not wonder then if he tempts us to keep at a distance from the altar, if he tempts us by distractions at the very moment of our Communion, or again, if afterwards he endeavours by suggestions contrary to the Angelic virtue or the Christian faith, to stifle the good germ It has left in our hearts. As to Christians who renew the sacrilege of Judas, the devil tempts them to despair and suicide, that they may die the traitor's death. An unworthy Communion has often been the cause of sickness, of infirmity, of death (1 Cor. xi. 30). If we are, and mean to continue, the friends of God, Satan is envious of our present, as well as of our eternal happiness. If he cannot kill us, and cast us into hell, he will harass and weary and annoy us. His rage against us is in proportion to the good we are called to do; he persecuted the Saints beyond all other men. But they gained the victory by uniting themselves to Jesus in His grief and Jesus in His love. Let us also escape the wiles of the

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infernal serpent by living close to Jesus in His Agony, and close to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Do we go often to Communion? Do we not sometimes omit our Communion when we are tempted or afflicted? When we have failed, do we seek the aid of the Virgin Mother who has crushed the serpent's head? Do we grasp her outstretched hand which will raise us up and lead us back to her Divine Son?

Practice.

Invoke the Agonising Heart of Jesus and the compassionate Heart of Mary for yourself. Pray especially for those who are suffering from temptations against faith, hope, and purity, and for those tempted even to sacrilege; after the example of the Mother of Mercy praying for Judas, intercede for all Christians who have fallen into this fearful sin. For the intention of those who are this day in their agony, impose on yourself some privation in regard to food, sleep, pleasure, or such things as increase the weakness of the flesh and the danger of temptation. Let the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus be the confidant of your plans and of your troubles, let It be the companion of your exile, unite yourself to it by a fervent Communion, asking particularly for the grace of watchfulness and of prayer.

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Example.

The conduct of St. Francis of Sales at the early age of seventeen, is an example for those who are undergoing the most painful temptations.

"This temptation began by the thought that perhaps he was not in a state of grace, and the sense of his own weakness, of his want of courage and energy, made it seem the more probable to him. The thought was enough to plunge a heart like his into the deepest grief, but he did not allow himself to be entirely cast down, for he said to himself, that God, Who does nothing in vain, does not give us the grace of courage until the moment when we need to exercise it, that in the meantime all He requires of us is that we should have a desire to resist temptation whenever it may come upon us, a disposition to pray for grace when we need it, and a hope of gaining the victory by His help. But the temptation was not to be set at rest by these reasonings. Spiritual sweetness, which he had long enjoyed, forsook him, he was now insensible to all that had been the delight of his heart, nothing that he read or heard made any impression on him, and he began to think that this dryness was the punishment of some infidelity, that perhaps he had lost the favour of God by mortal sin, and was now an object of His anger and aversion; along with this overwhelming idea came to his mind the doctrine of

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the fewness of the saved, the depths of the mystery of predestination, the awful severity of the judgments of God, his own misery, which his humility made him feel the more acutely; it seemed to him impossible that such a creature should be amongst the small number of the Elect. The torments of hell were as nothing to him in comparison with the thought that those in hell blasphemed God, and do not love Him. He exclaimed, 'O Lord, if I am never to see Thee, at least grant one alleviation to my misery, let me never curse and blaspheme Thee. O Love, O Charity, O Beauty, to which I have consecrated all my affections, am I never to enjoy the delights of Thy presence? Am I never to be filled with the joy of Thy countenance? Am I not to reach the lovely tabernacle where dwells my God? O most glorious Virgin, whose beauty would gladden hell itself, shall I never see thee, fair as the moon, brilliant as the sun, in the Kingdom of my Lord? Will it not be given to me to share in the glory of the resurrection? Yet did not my dear Jesus die for me as well as for others? Be that as it may, Lord, if I may not love Thee in the next life, since no one confesses to Thee in hell, at least let me spend every moment of my short life on earth in loving Thee.'

"In the midst of this bitter anguish, he was visibly wasting away, his colour left him, and he was soon attacked by jaundice, from which he

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suffered much. He could hardly eat, drink, or sleep, or drag himself along, and in bed he found no rest. But he never diminished his usual prayers and exercises of piety, on the contrary, he redoubled his supplications to God and to the Blessed Virgin, beseeching them to keep hope in the divine mercy alive in his heart.

"One day as he was returning from college in a state of great depression, the holy youth entered the Church of Saint-Etienne-des-Grès, and went to pray in the chapel of our Lady, where he had some time before made a resolution of perpetual chastity. A tablet was there with a prayer to the Mother of God written on it, for the use of the Faithful; he seized it eagerly, and weeping, said with his heart rather than his lips, 'Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,' &c. Then turning to God, he begged that by the intercession of Mary, his body and spirit might be restored to their former state; he made a vow of perpetual chastity, and promised, in memory of this vow, to say a chaplet of six decades every day. Immediately he felt a sudden movement pass through his whole body, and he recovered perfect health; his soul, which had for six weeks undergone such indescribable sufferings, enjoyed the deepest peace, and he blessed God, knowing that so great a trial had only been permitted for his greater good."*

* Hamon, *Vie de St. François de Sales*, l. i., ch. iii.

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SIXTH DAY.

COMPASSION FOR OUR NEIGHBOURS.

Spiritual Reading.

ONE cause of the Agony of Jesus was His immense compassion for all sufferers. He had taken upon Himself all our ills, and He felt them all as if they were His own. Our Divine Head was afflicted by the sufferings common to all His members, by those peculiar to each one, still more by the anguish of His most holy Mother, and by the agonies of the dying. How much we sometimes feel the misfortunes, the sicknesses and trials of our friends and relations!

Meditation.

I. The compassion Jesus felt for all humanity caused him interior suffering. He bore our sorrows as well as our sins (Isa. liii. 4). He felt them by sympathy as acutely as if they had been His own. Have we compassion for the bodily or mental sufferings of those who are not united to us by nature or affection? Does our efficacious or generous compassion extend beyond the bounds of our own parish, or city, province, or country? I am little touched by the troubles of a rival nation. I know that in certain parts of the world thousands of children

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are daily cast away or forsaken by their parents; do I pity their sad fate? There are millions of idolaters sitting in the shadow of death; what have I done to make the light of faith shine upon them? Jesus died to give them life, but I would not willingly become their apostle by suffering! I should not bless any afflictions sent by God to enable me while I remain at home to exercise a distant apostolate! Alas! my Christian sympathy is a fire that scarcely burns, and its warmth cannot be felt at any distance. Do the sick, the infirm, the poor and ignorant around me benefit in any way by my compassionate charity?

II. Jesus suffered from His compassion for His mystical Body. He felt the sufferings which were to come upon the Church, from the schisms of her own children, from the sight of Christian people exposed by unjust conquerors to the risk of losing their faith; and of Catholic nations whose laws, customs, and ideas, are in opposition to the Gospel. Do these ills trouble me? Am I wounded by that which wounds her? Are the honour and the rights of the Church dear to me as the honour and rights of my mother? Is my compassion for the Ministers and children of the Church universal or Catholic, like charity, like the Heart of Jesus? No one was excluded from the love of that Divine Heart, or from the benefits gained by Its sorrows and Its Blood; the Church excludes

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no one, but I am exclusive, I have aversions and antipathies, I make selections and exceptions. The Mother of God has the first place in the Church because of her holiness; am I grieved when I hear Mary outraged as regards her perpetual virginity or her divine maternity? Have I a devotion to our Lady of the Seven Dolours? Have I the pious habit of contemplating Mary at the foot of the Cross, and taking refuge in her compassionate Heart? The Vicar of Christ has the place of chief power in the Church; am I touched by the sorrows and trials of this common Father of our souls? Is my sympathy for his august sorrows, my zeal for his cause, such as to let God and man see that I am a child of that great family which owns him as its visible Head? Can it be known that I am a disciple of Jesus Who poured forth a Sweat of Blood because of His compassion for us, that I am one of those voluntary victims who sacrifice themselves by prayer and by suffering?

III. The special compassion of Jesus for the dying was another cause of His sufferings. The merit of His Agony gave efficiency to their moral and physical suffering. He followed them beyond death, He was grieved by the sufferings of the souls in Purgatory, far more by the ruin of those in hell. What is the cause of my sadness and affliction? Is it my inability to convert dying sinners? Is it the fear of the

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risks even the just must run in their passage from time to eternity? Is it compassion for the cruel separations that take place? Alas! when I sorrow for death, it is chiefly because I have lost a friend, a relation, or benefactor. What do the satisfactions and prayers, the good works and sufferings which I offer to God to deliver or to solace any soul in Purgatory amount to? Multitudes are lost every day, and I do not even think of it! One more soul in hell! It is worse than if the whole material world were in ruins. But I am indifferent, I do nothing. God would have saved such a dying person if He had foreseen that I would make a great sacrifice for him; but I make none, not even for the souls of those nearest and dearest to me. Oh, how little is my heart like the Agonising Heart of Jesus! The token of the predestined is, that they are conformable to the Son of God, how will God ever see it in me, unless I become more compassionate, more zealous, more apostolic? (Rom. viii. 29.)

Practice.

Invoke the Agonising Heart of Jesus and the compassionate Heart of Mary for yourself. Let your compassion reach even the most suffering and forsaken souls in Purgatory. Let it reach all who are most afflicted on earth, all sufferers, all sinners; redouble your care and attention

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for any of your friends or relations who are suffering; help, at least by your prayers, all those generous souls who devote themselves to assuaging the sufferings of others. For the intention of those to-day in their agony, speak some good words to a poor person, and give him an alms.

Example.

The most tender compassion may accompany the most austere penance; the most sympathising hearts are often found in the cloister. St. Hyacinth Mariscotti, a Franciscaness, at Viterbo, was a victim at once to charity and to mortification. She was of a rich and noble family, and several times every year she received from her relations valuable presents, which she used immediately to distribute to the poor. In the winter, if some half-clothed beggar-woman came to the grille of the monastery, Hyacinth would retire for a moment, take off her under tunic and give it to her, glad to bear the cold herself rather than let another bear it; she gave even the covering of her bed. At meals, if she heard that some poor person was waiting for an alms, she would rise and give away her own portion. When she had nothing to give, she would burst into tears, and say—"Why cannot I go into the streets and public places and preach to the rich, charity to the poor? Am I poor, I who want nothing? The real poor are

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those who are in want; but the rich let them die of hunger, and squander what might support them. What disorder! what madness!" When any member of the family died, her brother was in the habit of getting several Masses said. The charitable Nun begged to have the money which would be spent in this manner in case of her death. "I wish to give it to the poor now," she said, "for I am willing to suffer the pains of Purgatory that I may lessen their troubles in this world."

In cases where the sufferings of sickness or imprisonment were added to those of poverty, her charity became more ardent than ever. A poor prisoner was so closely guarded that no one could give him any help or comfort. The Saint sent him a fish, ready cooked, thinking that the gaoler would let this trifling alms pass. The prisoner received it, and began to eat it, but what was his surprise when he found concealed inside it a letter from St. Hyacinth, who cared for his soul even more than for his body! Her advice and encouragement touched his heart and filled him with joy. A Lay Sister in her convent had a cancer in the breast, the smell of which was so fearful that no one could bear it. Hyacinth asked to be allowed the privilege of tending her and dressing the wound, and would even kiss it.

When worn out with austerities so that she could hardly stand, she still found strength and

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energy to assist the afflicted, speaking to those present, writing to the absent, and quickening the charity of others in their service. She also employed trustworthy persons to visit widows, orphans, and the sick, on her behalf.

One year an epidemic made such ravages at Viterbo, that the hospital could not contain the sick, and the hospital nurses being themselves struck down, could no longer take care of them. The Saint's heart was filled with grief, especially at the thought that the dying were not sufficiently assisted in their last passage. She sent for some of the inhabitants, whom she had brought back to God, and was leading in the way of perfection. Her eloquent appeal induced these good people to form a Confraternity for the aid of the sick and dying. They collected alms for them through the town, they went to the hospital, some in the morning and some in the evening, swept the wards, made the beds, exhorted and consoled the sick and dying, and did everything in their power to assist them. The Confraternity soon numbered eighty members, some of whom formed a Religious Order called the Oblates of Mary, and founded a hospital for the lame and for poor old men.

Pious reader, you wish to console Jesus and Mary in their sorrows, you are able to labour for the afflicted, listen to the words of Saint Hyacinth, and learn from her spirit: "Oh, why," said she, "cannot I become food and

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clothing for the poor! Would that my tunic could be multiplied so as to cover all poor women! O God of my heart, why am not I mistress of the universe, that I might give it all for love of Thee and of the poor."*

SEVENTH DAY.

OUTRAGES OFFERED TO GOD.

Spiritual Reading.

THE sins of men were one cause of the moral sufferings of the Son of God. He had undertaken to expiate them; He was to satisfy for them all to the justice of His Father. He suffered as if He Himself had committed them; His agonies and satisfactions were a reparation for the outrage offered by sin to the Creator. Who loves God as much as Jesus loved Him? Who feels offences against God as Jesus felt them? Alas! He saw that in many cases His Blood, His Sufferings and Death, would be all in vain!

Meditation.

I. Jesus in His Agony had a distinct knowledge of all the sins of the world. He considered them in the bitterness of His Soul, He took

* Vetninuglia, *Vita della B. Giacinta Mariscotti*, capp. xi., xiv.

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them upon Himself, He expiated them, He bore their penalty. And I forget my own sins; I should like to lose sight of them, I make light of them to myself; I try to shorten my penance, and even to stifle my remorse. I often omit my evening examination of conscience, and if I make a long examination before confession, I do it at the cost of my contrition; I spend too little time and trouble in exciting myself to sorrow for the past, in making a firm purpose of amendment for the future. If I were to meditate on the Agonies of my Saviour, if I were to contemplate Him prostrate on the ground, bathed in Blood, because of His horror for my sins, my penitence would be more lively and efficacious. My heart is withered by selfishness. Why do I not go and draw the contrition I want from its source in the Agonising Heart of my Deliverer? I will not look at my sins face to face; but Jesus saw them one by one, and wept tears of Blood for each. I confess them as if I were merely telling a story that does not concern me, or I even defend myself while I am accusing myself; but Jesus confessed my transgressions as if they had been His own, He struck His Breast as if it was the breast of a sinner. O my soul, learn to feel as thy Master did, supply what is wanting in thy contrition by the superabundance of His sorrow!

II. Jesus in His Agony felt the outrage offered by sin to His Heavenly Father in a

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way which we cannot understand or express. The infinite love of God for men is continually wounded by their ingratitude. He saw the extent and the depth of this injury; the Saints have felt it as He did. A blasphemy or impure word has often wounded them to their very hearts, and cast them into an agony which seemed as if it would take away their life; they have multiplied acts of homage and love in reparation for the offences offered to their Heavenly Father. But how do we respond to the sadness of our Agonising Lord? Alas! we are indifferent. Yes, I am indifferent to outrages against my Creator and my Saviour. Perhaps I am a member of one of the Associations of Reparation which happily exist among us; but I do not really feel an offence against God as much as one against myself, or those I love. The King of Heaven is outraged all over the world, by words, by acts, by writings; and I do not think of it, I do nothing to restore to my God the accidental glory of which sin robs Him! Alas! if I loved Him more, how full of zeal for His glory should I be! How many tears I should shed to efface even one sin.

III. Jesus in His Agony also felt the injury which sin does to the images of God—that is, to souls. He became incarnate, He lived, He suffered, He died that He might restore to them their glory, their supernatural beauty; but He saw that by their abuse of His graces, by

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their contempt for His Blood, by their resistance to His inspirations, they would again be disfigured, tarnished, and soiled. Am I in sorrow and agony for the harm that sin has done to my soul? Men who lose their fortune or honour are sometimes in such grief that they lose their life or their reason: what is the amount of my grief when by my own fault I have lost sanctifying grace—that is, have lost God? I make a little act of contrition, a confession so formal that it leaves me still in doubt whether I have been restored to my position as the adopted child of the Most High, and have recovered my right to a heavenly inheritance. For there are sins which please me, I have favourite sins, I keep my evil habits. Sin is the evil of the understanding, of the memory, of the imagination, and of the body; it is the evil of the present, it will be the evil of the future. Do we really look on it in this light? Is sin itself, the offence against God, the loss of sanctifying grace, the stain incurred by ourselves and our neighbours, the thing in all the world which causes us the most bitter grief? Adorable Saviour, teach us to repair the harm which sin has done to man; and to do or suffer anything that Thine image and likeness may shine in the souls which Thou hast purchased!

Practice.

Invoke the Agonising Heart of Jesus and the compassionate Heart of Mary for yourself.

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Pray for Priests and Religious who are labouring for the conversion of sinners, unbelievers, and idolaters, that by their success the number of offences against God may be lessened. For the intention of those in their agony to-day, draw some person from a life of sin, hasten the return of some prodigal, preserve some soul from danger. Make an effort to overcome your chief fault, or any habit which leads you into sin; never relax your warfare against your passions, let the violence done to self be the measure of your spiritual progress. Go to Communion to make reparation for the injuries done to God and to the Heart of Jesus.

Example.

The grief of the Blessed Victoria Fornari, Foundress of the *Annonciades Celestes*, on hearing of any offence against God, was so great that she used to change colour and almost to faint away. While she prayed, she often shed floods of tears, and on being asked the cause, she answered, "Nothing is the matter with me, but how much my God is offended!" On hearing of the commission of a deliberate venial sin, she offered herself to God to suffer every kind of ill, that His Divine Majesty might no longer be subject to such outrages. She looked on it as a cause for gratitude that in her monastery she could not see or hear the sins daily committed in the world against the God of all goodness.

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She said once, "I know a person who would certainly have died of grief, if God had let her see all the crimes by which He is daily offended." This person was herself. While yet in the world, Victoria had gathered many poor young girls together in her house, and given large alms that they might be kept from sin, and after her entrance into Religion, she multiplied her prayers and penances for the same end. One day a Nun was describing the unworthy manner in which our Lord had been treated in the Sacrament of His Love. The holy Foundress seemed to be suffering greatly. The Nun, not suspecting the reason, was going on with her narrative, when Victoria, distracted with grief, exclaimed, "Enough, enough, my daughter; for pity's sake say no more, for I feel as if I should die." Her work fell from her hands, and she expressed the greatness of her sorrow that God had been offended in so fearful a manner.*

St. Catharine de Ricci mourned constantly for the sins of the world, and offered prayers, fasts, and penances to God in reparation for them. She interposed herself between guilty souls and the justice of God, she wished to become their surety, and to sacrifice herself for them in payment of their debts. Sometimes she seemed weak, wearied, and bowed down as if she were bearing an immense burden. "It seems to me,"

* *Vita della B. Maria Vittoria Fornari*, l. ii., cap. iii.

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she would say, "that my Lord has put the whole world on my shoulders." On different occasions when our Lord showed her the sins of men, her horror was such that she became pale as a corpse, or fell into terrible convulsions. On the first Sunday of Advent, 1542, Catharine was in a state of languor and dejection, and wept bitterly; she said that our Lord had shown her how men were preparing to keep Christmas. "Alas! what treasons, what deeds of wickedness are being perpetrated against our Saviour and King! How can I live while the Divine Majesty is so grievously offended? God is despised, and souls are lost. It is too much—I can no longer bear it!" Even during her ecstacies she used to burst into tears when our Lord showed her the sins of others.

The torments of the lost in hell were seen at different times by Rose Mary Serio, a Carmelite Nun, and our Lord told her that this vision was intended to incite her to ardent prayer and fresh penance for those in mortal sin. She begged her Superior's permission to take a severe discipline three times a day, but the request was refused. One day when she was in the choir with the other Sisters, she had an ecstacy in which our Lord appeared to her, and asked her why she had not obeyed His orders. She said, "Because obedience did not allow me, but Thou art my only good, send me the troubles Thou wouldst have me bear for the

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salvation of these poor souls!" The whole Community heard these words. Our Lord commended her obedience, and granted her prayer by letting her suffer for seven years pains like those of hell. The Prioress trembled with fear at the idea, and waited to see what our Lord would do. The Saint was soon seized by pains and convulsions, an internal fire seemed to devour her, her state was so sad that those who saw her could not refrain from tears. Her hands and feet were paralysed, she could not be laid in bed, there was nothing for it but to leave her on a chair in the corner of the infirmary, and as she could do nothing for herself, she had the additional pain of being a trouble to every one. In the hope of alleviating her sufferings, they wrapped her in the skin of a sheep that had just been killed, but it was left on so long that putrefaction set in, and her flesh was eaten by worms. The devils also tormented this innocent victim, they beat her, dragged her along the ground, threw her from the top to the bottom of the stairs, and left her almost dead. Her father, Doctor Serio, was sent for, in the hope that he might be able to give her some relief; but he despaired of her case, and burst into tears. "Father, do not weep," said the generous sufferer, "these are favours sent by my Divine Spouse." She was unable to take meat, or anything made with milk; when she was obliged to try such food, a vomiting of blood

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was the consequence. Those around her generally showed no compassion for her sufferings, but reproached her and spoke harshly to her. It would be impossible to describe, or even to imagine, all that this heroic Carmelite suffered for seven years, in order to repair the outrage offered to God by the sins of others.*

EIGHTH DAY.

THE SORROWFUL PASSION.

Spiritual Reading.

THE foresight of His Death and Passion, with all their attending circumstances of humiliation and pain, was another cause of our Saviour's Agony. The dignity of the life which he was about to give up, and the bitterness of the torments which he was soon to undergo, were fully present to His mind. He suffered by anticipation, and the extent of His foreknowledge enlarged the sphere of His sufferings, for He saw that His death would have the effect of increasing the damnation of many souls, whom He would fain have redeemed by His Blood. The name of Passion has often been given by ancient writers to the martyr's death; it also belongs to that slow and hidden martyrdom,

* Gentili, *Vita della V. Rosa Maria Serio*, cap. xv.

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that persecution, which is the portion of all who will live godly in Jesus Christ (2 Tim. iii. 12). Whoever wishes to be a martyr or witness to our Lord by the holiness of his life, must prepare for a sorrowful passion.

Meditation.

I. Jesus saw all His future sufferings, even down to their most minute details. But He kept within the limits of reality, and was not that reality most fearful? But we, on the contrary, exaggerate everything; we exaggerate the wrong our neighbours have done us, we exaggerate the dangers we have to go through, we exaggerate the evils which beset or threaten us. Instead of making things smooth by the use of good common sense, we make mountains out of mole-hills; we imagine a thousand snares and devices for our ruin, when, all the while, our own irritable and suspicious temper is our greatest enemy. If we have no causes of sorrow we invent them; we torment ourselves ingeniously; we turn away our minds from the sins and failings for which we ought to mourn, and we fancy ourselves forsaken by God, ill-treated by man, and left a prey to the caprice of fortune. This habit of being guided by feeling rather than by reason makes our progress in virtue small and our merits inconsiderable. O Divine Truth, Incarnate Word, Agonising

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Saviour, heal us, give us the spirit of understanding and fortitude, make us calm, give us the patience which we need with ourselves even more than with others.

II. The sufferings of His Body were a cause of affliction to Jesus, but in all things He preserved the divine order. His Soul loved His Body merely as a servant and instrument united to It for time and eternity. Do we submit to the divine order of things? Have we not an inordinate affection for the body? Does not the flesh tyrannise over us? Do not we flatter it? Are not the fears which trouble us almost always fears of bodily ills? Our bodily sufferings, in comparison with those which Jesus knew to be coming on Him, are next to nothing, yet they are enough to overwhelm us with sadness, and to give rise to murmuring and impatience. The least trouble is a reason for neglecting the duties of our position, for omitting our religious exercises and falling into sin. God sends sorrow to us as He sent it to His only Son, to be the means of expiating sin and gaining merit; we reject the benefits, and it becomes to us a cause of new imperfections. When illness comes upon us we ought to accept it willingly, considering that we are like the lightning-conductor, which preserves the home of those dearest to us from storms. But if our suffering is at once the result of our own folly or vice, and the cause

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of fresh sins, how can we then draw down the blessing of God upon others? How can we resemble Jesus in His Agony? One only way is left — immediate penitence and complete resignation. Do we take this way?

III. The foreknowledge of His cruel and shameful death was another special cause of suffering to our Lord. He knew its time, its place, its manner, its every circumstance; how it would profit some, how it would prove useless to others. He prepared for it by repeated acts of the most meritorious resignation. The thought of death alarms and saddens us also, but while our Lord was sorrowful in view of the sufferings of the Body before being forsaken by the Soul, we are sorrowful because the soul must forsake the pleasures and honours of this world, must leave those it has loved too well. We do not shrink from death, as Jesus did, merely because soul and body must then part company; we shrink from it because our past life has been bad, our present is unsatisfactory, our future doubtful. We know not the circumstances of our death, and yet on them depends our eternal condition. Shall we die in a state of sin or a state of grace? Shall we be able to receive the sacrament of reconciliation? Our very ignorance ought to keep us in fear, so that we should avoid sin and the occasions of sin. In the Litany of the Saints, the Church teaches us to pray — "From sudden and unprovided

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death, O Lord deliver us." Deliverance from "sudden death" is a great favour, which we are quite unable to gain for ourselves, but it will be our own fault if we die an "unprovided death." Jesus Christ has taught us, both by word and example, how to prepare and to keep ourselves always ready for death. Is my whole life, like that of my Divine Example, a preparation to die well? Do I spend some days every year, or some hours every month, in getting ready? Do I pray every day for a good death? Is my conduct in affliction, in sickness, in all the pains of this life, such as will lead to a holy end?

Practice.

Invoke the Agonising Heart of Jesus and the compassionate Heart of Mary for yourself. Pray especially for those who have a sad future before them, or who are afflicted beyond measure at the death of those dear to them. For the intention of those in their agony to-day, bear with patience any physical sufferings, any unkindness, injuries, or persecutions, that may come upon you. Prepare some sick person for death, by reminding him of that fearful passage, if he forgets it; by promoting his conversion, if he is a sinner; by leading him to perfect resignation, if he is already in a state of grace. Every night say to yourself—"If God were to

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call me this night, where should I go?" Make an act of contrition, recommend your death to our Lady, and then lie down in your bed as if it were your coffin.

Example.

The remembrance of our Saviour's sufferings has often caused Saints an agony like that which He underwent from the anticipation.

The Blessed Mary Victoria Fornari, of whom we have already spoken, was in the habit of meditating on those sufferings. "She was so touched by our Saviour's Passion, that though not by nature easily moved to tears, she could not hear of it without weeping. When these sorrowful mysteries were the subject of the reading in the refectory, she was unable to taste food, and it became necessary to change the subject. Nevertheless, she thought herself too insensible, and used to say—"If we could feel the sorrows of Jesus Christ as we ought, we should die at once of grief and love."*

On Holy Thursday, 1585, Saint Mary Magdalen de Pazzi longed earnestly to feel the weariness which our Lord suffered in bearing the Cross to Mount Calvary. Her desire was granted; all through the following day and night her sufferings of mind and body were extraordinary. Her lips became livid, her

* Collet, *La Vie de la V. M. Victoire Fornari*, liv. iv., m. vii.

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countenance death-like, her whole body so weak that she could hardly stand, and she often wept. For three hours her agony was so intense that those who saw her feared for her life. Her face was covered with great drops of sweat, tears flowed from her eyes, her breast heaved, and she breathed with difficulty.* During twenty-six hours Magdalen felt a certain proportion of those sufferings which Jesus endured in the mysteries of His Passion. In the course of this long trance she fell heavily on the ground, as our Saviour did beneath the Cross; she stretched out her arms, as He did when He was about to be crucified; they became stiff and hard as wood. All at once she rose, and with her arms still extended in the form of a cross, pronounced the Seven Words of our Lord on the Cross with such devotion that the other Nuns were full of wonder. At last her head fell on one side and her whole body sank down, so that they thought she was dead.†

The Passion of Jesus and the sorrows of Mary had such power over the heart of Saint Margaret of Cortona that all bitter and hard things became sweet and easy to her. One night she prayed most earnestly with many tears that our Lord would grant her the privi-

* *Vita e Ratti di Santa Maria-Maddalena de Pazzi*, p. II, cap. xv.

† *Ibid.*, cap. xix.

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lege of feeling, as far as her strength would permit, the sorrows of our Lady at the foot of the Cross. The next morning, after Mass, in the church of the Franciscans, she tasted the bitterness of the Passion. In a trance she saw Judas come forward; she saw the Jews rush upon our Lord; she was present at their councils, she heard their clamours, she saw the Disciples forsake Him, she heard St. Peter deny Him, she witnessed His scourging, His crowning with thorns, and all the other sorrowful mysteries. At the words of Pilate and the cries of the crowd her grief was such that she fainted, and appeared to be dead. She saw the Virgin Mother follow her Divine Son through the crowd of blasphemers; she described, with groans, all that passed before her eyes, even to the Wound made by the lance in our Saviour's Side. All the inhabitants of Cortona were deeply moved. Men and women left their work; even the children and the sick thronged to the church of St. Francis, sighing and weeping. Margaret seemed as if fastened to the Cross, and her torments were so intense that they thought she could not live. She ground her teeth, she writhed like a worm; her face was ashy pale, her pulse and speech were gone, and she was as cold as ice. She was so completely unconscious that she did not notice the crowd, nor recognise the women who supported her in their arms. At the hour of our Lord's death

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her head fell on her breast, and she remained motionless and insensible, so that those who were present thought life was extinct. But in the evening, as if her Divine Master had called her to share in His resurrection, Margaret awoke to life and joy.*

"In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin" (Eccles. vii. 40). O Christian, remember also the Passion of thy Saviour, of which the Eucharist is the memorial, and thou shalt heap merit upon merit.

NINTH DAY.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

Spiritual Reading.

By His Agony on the Cross our Lord sanctified the last agony of all His mystical members who die on a bed of suffering, or by a violent death. For them He prayed, for their sake He was forsaken by His Divine Father; for their sake He bore parching thirst and all His other pains. He was assailed by the devil that we might conquer him at the hour of our death. He satisfied our obligations, He condescended to make up for our inability. Is not a daily cross

* *Acta Sanctorum*, die xxii. Febr., *Vita, auctore Juncta Bevagnati*, cap. v., nn. 83, 84.

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before us? Ought we not to long for the time when we may be able to say in St. Paul's words, "With Christ I am nailed to the Cross?" (Gal. ii. 19.)

Meditation.

I. Consider that Jesus on the Cross fulfilled all our obligations. He made satisfaction for our sins to His Father's justice, He taught us our duties. Death accepted in a spirit of faith and obedience would serve to expiate our faults: how do we accept it? how are we disposed to meet it? how do we prepare others to receive it? Perhaps we only consider it as a punishment, or as a misfortune which justifies our murmurs against Providence. Why do not we, like Jesus, look on it as a means of glorifying our Heavenly Father, and of saving souls by expiating sins? The Cross is a pulpit from which our Master preaches to us, and shows us an example of what we ought to do at the moment of death. He teaches us to pray God to forgive those who have offended us or shortened our days; to thirst for the salvation of souls, especially of those intrusted to us; to guide them to Paradise; to bequeath those we leave behind to Mary as her children, and to make them look on her as their Mother; to complain, if we will, that God has forsaken us, but at the same time to commend our soul, our eternity, our salvation, into His fatherly hands;

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to fulfil the Scripture, to finish all our religious duties and those of our state of life. How do we profit by the example and by the instructions of our Master? How do we endeavour to make the dying profit by them?

II. Consider that on the Cross Jesus supplied all that we may be unable to do at our death. Our weakness may prevent our making many acts of virtue, may even deprive us of consciousness; our Divine Head, in His last Agony, loved God for us, and multiplied acts of virtue on our behalf. How full of love were the last pulses of the Heart of Jesus! How full of merit were His intentions and His will! He made them over to us to supply our want of power. In Him we have everything by virtue of the union between the members and the Head. While we have life, do we endeavour to share the spirit, to learn the feelings and thoughts, to practice the virtues of the God-Man dying on the Cross? When we are with the dying, instead of wearying them by multiplied acts, do we lead them gently into the Heart of the Crucified, that they may know what they are to Him, and what He is to them? Do we try to make them place all their reliance in the goodness of the Saviour who died for them? Do we fill our hearts, and the hearts of the dying, with contrition, resignation, and love, from the treasures of His Agonising Heart?

III. Consider that Jesus on the Cross ought

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to be the object of our tenderest devotion. What will be left to us when we come to die? Jesus Crucified. We shall have the crucifix in our hands, on our bed, in our grave; everything will have forsaken us except Jesus and His Cross. From the depths of the grave; from Purgatory itself, we shall still say, *O Crux, ave, spes unica*—"Hail Cross, my only hope!" Have we begun to welcome the Cross, to love it, to place all our hope in it? Have we consecrated ourselves to the Heart of the dying Saviour? Do we adore It? Do we share Its affections? There is nothing so great, so sublime, so touching, so full of power, as the last sigh of God dying on the Cross for the salvation of men. Do we seek to complete our union with Jesus crucified, and our likeness to Him? What are we doing to gain a perfect devotion to His Agonies, and to the Divine Heart which sheds on us such floods of graces and of love?

Practice.

Invoke the Agonising Heart of Jesus and the compassionate Heart of Mary for your own needs. Pray especially for those who suffer death unjustly, or because of the Christian faith. For the intention of those who are this day in their agony assist some dying person, and make interest for him with pious people on earth, with the Saints in Heaven, and the holy souls

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in Purgatory. Offer some sacrifice to God for the triumph of the Church, and for the preservation of the faith in your own country. If you are ill, say the Alphabet of the Cross, of which a pious author thus speaks: "Would you always be contented? Then think that your bed is a cross to which you are fastened. And let me teach you in alphabetical order the things you ought to do in order rightly to bear your cross of sickness."

A. As Spouse of Jesus crucified, you should love the Cross.

B. Be glad to taste the bitterness of the Cross.

C. Cleave to the Cross as to the instrument of your salvation.

D. Die on the Cross as on a bed of state.

E. Esteem the Cross as the money that buys Heaven.

F. Form the sign of the Cross on all your senses.

G. Go to the Cross as to the scene of your Saviour's triumph.

H. Honour the Cross as a precious relic of your Lord.

I. Immolate your flesh as a victim in honour of the Cross.

J. Jesus would have you feed your soul with the sweet fruits of the Cross.

K. *Kyrie eleison.* Say often, "By Thy Holy Cross, Lord have mercy on me."

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L. Long for the Cross as the heritage of the true children of God.
M. Make the Cross your book, and learn from it the goodness of God and the malice of sinners.
N. Never forsake the Cross.
O. Offer your body to bear as many crosses as it can.
P. Punish your faults by the rod of the Cross.
Q. Quit all things to be with Jesus on the Cross.
R. Receive the Cross as the badge of the Son of God.
S. Sanctify your flesh by the touch of the Cross.
T. Triumph in the Cross as in your greatest glory.
U. Unite your cross to the Cross of Jesus, that you may become an apostle by suffering.
V. Very humbly bear your cross, for you are not worthy of it.
W. Winter never brought so sweet a spring as does the winter passed beneath the Cross.
X. Xavier teaches you to say while you bear the Cross, "Yet more, Lord, yet more!"
Y. You should kiss your cross, as if it were a part of the true Cross.

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Z. Zacheus shows you how to climb on a tree—that is, the tree of the Cross, that you may have a better view of Jesus your Saviour and your God.*

Example.

We give an account of the death of Blessed Andrew Bobola, a Polish Priest of the Society of Jesus, because of its special resemblance to the death of our Lord.

"Wednesday, the 16th of May, fell within the Octave of the Ascension as celebrated by the Latin Church. A band of Cossacks entered Ianoff in the morning. Andrew calmly awaited them, kneeling on the road to Mohilno, with eyes and hands raised to Heaven. He offered himself to God, saying many times, like our Lord in the Garden of Olives, 'Thy will be done, O my God!' The Cossacks gallopped up to him with shouts of joy. They urged him to become a schismatic, but they urged in vain; then they broke forth into threats, abuse, and blasphemies. Swords were drawn, blood flowed from two terrible wounds in the captive's shoulders. Our Lord in the Garden said to those who laid hold on Him, 'If therefore you seek Me, let these go their way,' and His Disciples escaped. John Domanowski, the

* Bonnefous, *Le Chrétien Charitable*, ch. iv., art. ii., n. 40, slightly modified.

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companion of this blessed Martyr, also escaped. The Cossacks raised the Father from his knees with violence, stripped him of some of his clothes, dragged him to a neighbouring hedge, bound him to a tree, and beat him cruelly. Then, as if to imitate the Jews, and make the disciple yet more like His Master, they cut some tender and flexible branches, soaked them in water, and platted them into a crown, which they placed on their victim's head. It held him as in a vice. As the branches dried, it pressed more and more tightly, and his tormentors twisted them again to increase his sufferings. Then they unbound him from the tree, put a cord round his neck, and fastened its two ends to the saddles of two horsemen, who set off at a rapid pace, dragging him along. How painful was the way of Calvary to him! Exhausted by loss of blood, he was ready to drop every moment, but a Cossack armed with an axe followed him, and struck him between the shoulders whenever he seemed about to flag. Assavoula, the chief of the band, brandished his sabre to cleave the Missionary's skull. Andrew instinctively warded off the blow from his head, but it fell on his hand, and almost severed it from the arm. Assavoula struck a second blow; but Andrew tottered and fell, and the sabre came in contact with his foot, and made a deep wound. A Cossack put out his eyes with the point of a sabre.

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"The victim now lay bathed in blood at the feet of his executioners. As they looked about them, a diabolical thought occurred to their minds, they seized Andrew by one leg, and drew him rudely along the ground to a neighbouring butcher's shop. There they took off the rest of his garments, they lighted torches of pinewood and began to burn his breast and sides. They blasphemed and poured forth torrents of abuse while they struck, and pierced, and mutilated him; a cruel blow knocked out two of his teeth, but could not silence him. The flames had done their part, and the Martyr's flesh fell from his bones as if it were melted. Then they hung him up for some time by the feet. Their ferocity invented yet more fearful tortures. 'You have only a little tonsure,' cried one of them, 'we will make it larger;' and now the hatred of these miserable wretches for the Catholic Priesthood burst forth with all its violence. One of them took a knife, and with its point drew a new bloody tonsure on his head; he then dragged off the skin. The others seized Andrew's hands and flayed them, as if they would take away the holy anointing which had once consecrated them, but they only added a yet more precious anointing of blood. Again they cried out, 'We will show you what is done in the Roman Church, with these hands you used to turn over the leaves of the book on the altar, and we will turn over

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your skin.' His hands had only been raised in blessing, and now they skinned them, and took out the muscles, and cut the joints. The ceremony was not yet finished, the Cossacks said, 'He is now a Priest, he must have a chasuble.' They seized him, threw him on his face on a table, and took all the skin off his back; they then put chopped straw on this great wound, and turning over his body pressed it on the table, so that the straw stopped the flow of blood, and pierced his flesh, making his sufferings yet more intense.

"The Prophet said of our Lord, 'From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head, there is no soundness therein: wounds and bruises and swelling sores' (Isa. i. 6); and again, 'We have seen him, and there was no sightliness' (Isa. liii. 2); these words were to have their fulfilment also in the case of this holy Martyr. His enemies cut off his nose and lips, and cried out, 'He is not a man, but a monster, he only wants claws! we will supply them.' And cutting splinters of deal, they drove them under the nails of his hands and feet. The Martyr's charity still gave him strength to raise his hands towards Heaven; the more cruelly he was tormented, the more fervently he prayed. St. Bernard says, in speaking of our Saviour's sufferings, 'There was a trial of strength between the intensity of the Passion and the ardour of charity.' Andrew's charity, like that

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of our Lord, carried the day. He never murmurred or complained, but made frequent acts of faith, hope, and love; he also repeated, 'Jesus, Mary, help me.' He invoked St. Joseph, and said, 'O Lord, Thy will be done; into Thy hands I commend my spirit; Lord, enlighten these blind ones, and convert them.' Once more the Cossacks rushed upon him, they made a deep, wide wound in the back of his neck, and violently drew his tongue through it; they exhibited it as a trophy, and then threw it on the ground in contempt. The Martyr had fainted in his last effort to pronounce the sacred names of Jesus and Mary. His murderers thought he was dead, and cast him on a dunghill, but he still breathed. It seemed as if his heroic soul, with a strength beyond that of death, had determined to remain as long as possible in the narrow prison of the body, that it might offer a more complete sacrifice to God. The chief of the Cossacks gave the finishing stroke by piercing Andrew's side with his sabre."*

* R. P. Olivaint, *Notice Historique sur le B. André Bobola*, n. 11.

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II.—MEDITATIONS FOR ONE DAY IN EACH MONTH.

JANUARY.

THE GARDEN OF OLIVES.

Spiritual Reading.

AFTER He had instituted the adorable Sacrament of the Eucharist, in the guest-chamber on Mount Sion, our Lord went out of Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives, to a place called Gethsemani. While Judas was accomplishing his treason in the holy city, Jesus left eight of His Disciples at the entrance of the garden, and taking the three others with Him, said to them—"My soul is sorrowful, even unto death." Then He went a little further, and fell upon His face. What a mystery of weakness and of glory, of suffering and of love! What a contrast between the garden of delights where the first Adam wrought our ruin, and the garden of the Agony, where the Second Adam sanctifies us, and heals our sufferings!

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Meditation.

I. Consider that we have come from Paradise, and that all creation is an immense garden, where everything is intended to make us know and love and serve the Creator. But are we not of the number of those who walk through the garden of the universe, forgetting and offending God, withering the flowers by their touch and look, and in their turn wounded by everything with which they come in contact? To repair all this havoc, our Divine Master was pleased to begin His Passion in a garden, and so to beguile us away from the dangerous pleasures of earth. For His griefs are sweeter than all our foolish pleasures, and there is more real and lasting joy to be found in His Agony than in all the happiness by which the world seeks to intoxicate us. Which do I value most? Which do I love best? The griefs of Jesus, sufferings with Him and for Him, or the transitory good things and vile pleasure of the world?

The soul of the Christian ought to be an enclosed garden (Cant. iv. 12), where God may be pleased to come and abide. But is not ours often closed against its Divine Lord, and open to His enemies, sin and Satan? That gentle Saviour comes with His Sacred Head wet with the dew of the night, and His Body bathed in a Sweat of Blood. He stands at the door,

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knocking and saying—"Open to me, my love" (Cant. v. 2). But alas! my heart is deaf to the voice of Jesus in His Agony, my heart sleeps for all that is good, and my senses are only awake to evil. When my good Master comes into my heart, it is all so cold and dark that it is a kind of agony for Him to be there, and His prayer is turned into groaning. Temptation asks me to betray Him, and soon sin will drag Him forth to be crucified again. O Agonising Heart of Jesus, deliver me!

II. Consider that we are by our merits to gain the heavenly Paradise, where God will be all our joy. The earthly paradise was only a faint image and a foretaste of the heavenly one. Who does not wish to go to Heaven? Who would not gladly rest in the cool shades and taste the divine fruits of that delightful garden? But if we would merit such happiness, the present world must be to us a paradise of work (Genesis ii. 15) and watchfulness, the Passion of Jesus a paradise of suffering and resignation, for only on these terms will God open to us the paradise of joy and rest. Do we fulfil these conditions? Are we watchful in our work? Are we resigned in our sufferings?

If we were more faithful to Him, our Lord would be to us even in this life a paradise and garden of delights. Why was it that, when about to give Himself up to mortal sadness, to pour forth a Sweat of Blood and Water for

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us, He did not say to His Disciples—"Come and suffer with me?" Why did He only say—*Sedete* (Matt. xxvi. 36): "Rest yourselves, sit down, while I go and bear my cruel Agony?" It was because our good Master wished Himself to take the weariness and pain and agony, and leave us the rest and consolation and joy. His sufferings indeed bring forth the blessed fruits of resignation, peace, and joy in souls that are devoted to Him. Such souls enter into the Paradise of ineffable delight, which is in God Himself; they dwell in the clefts of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall (Cant. ii. 14), that is, in the very Heart of Jesus. When we loved our Lord better and more generously, did we not find in His Divine Heart an earnest of Paradise, a sure refuge where grief could not touch us, or where it was changed into joy by the virtue of His Pains and Sorrows?

III. Consider that the Garden of Olives lies on the road between our starting-point and our goal, between the earthly paradise and the heavenly Paradise. If Jesus is the way, and no man cometh to the Father but by Him (John xiv. 6), does not He lead us through trials and mental sufferings? As He entered the Garden, mortal sadness met Him; as He left it, the blackest treason. "The disciple is not above the master" (Matt. x. 24). "If in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke xxiii. 31). All

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holy souls have been transplanted into the Garden of the Agony, and have there grown to perfection. They have been watered by the tears of Jesus, His Blood has marked them as predestinate, and the constant care of the Church has kept the mark fresh. Their hues of beauty, their sweet fragrance, their rich fruits, are all due to the sufferings of the Crucified, to the Agonies of the Heart of Jesus. Have I ever withered souls by the scandal I have given? Do I long for the beauty of the Saints? Am I ready to go into the garden of the Agony, that I may become like them? Oh yes, I will go there, and that nothing may disturb me, I will say at the entrance, to my natural affections, my earthly cares, and temporal interests—*Sedete hic.* Stay here, be quiet, that I may go a little further to pray to my Saviour, to imitate Him and console Him.

The Agony which He bears is the agony of the penitent sinner, the agony of the poor forsaken soul, of the oppressed, of the just man under the weight of mental trouble or of external persecutions. He bore us all in His Heart, and His Heart is ever with those who fight for justice even unto death (Eccles. iv. 33). Do we imitate Him by sharing the sorrows and having compassion for the afflictions of others? Do we watch by those who are agonising? Do we pray for the afflicted? What help and consolation do we give them? Does not

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our admission into the Kingdom of Heaven depend on our charity for Jesus agonising in His members? (Matt. xxv. 34—40). The death-agony contains in itself all other agonies. What are we doing for Jesus in His dying friends? What zeal have we for the conversion of sinners, who are dying by thousands every day?

Practice.

Daily recommend the dying to the protection of the Agonising Heart of Jesus. To-day pray especially for children who are to die, and ask that they may receive the grace of baptism. Invoke our Lady of Seven Dolours, our Lady of Compassion, and the compassionate Heart of Mary on behalf of the dying.

Example.

Jesus Himself shows us the example of assisting the dying. He assisted St. Joseph in his calm and quiet death, and He assisted the good thief in his death of suffering and shame. The companion of His crucifixion only asked to be remembered; our dying Saviour promised him Paradise (Luke xxiii. 42, 43). One of the offices of the Blessed Virgin after the Ascension of our Lord was to prepare the first Christians for death. She was like a mother to the dying, and never left them till they were ready for Heaven.

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A mystical writer gives the following instance: "Among the five thousand converts baptised at Jerusalem was a poor girl of lowly birth. During a long illness, which she bore badly, she lost her fervour, and even her baptismal innocence. The devil seeing his opportunity, came to her under the form of a woman, and, by speaking against the religion of Christ, and threatening her with the vengeance of the Jews, tried to make her renounce her faith. 'I will do all you wish,' said the sick girl, 'but how shall I act towards the beautiful and gentle Lady whom I have seen with the Disciples of Jesus, and whom I cannot but love.' 'You must distrust her and hate her most of all,' said Satan, 'for she has the greatest power to do you harm.' One of the seventy-two Disciples heard of this sad case and went to the sufferer, who was now drawing near her end. She would not attend to his holy words, and even covered her head that she might not hear them. The Apostle St. John went with no better success. He told the most merciful Mother of Jesus, and she immediately fell on her knees and prayed for the conversion of this poor sinner, but our Lord appeared deaf to her entreaties, and gave her no light as to what she should do. However, she felt bound to fulfil her maternal office while His will was unknown, and she continued to pray with the most fervent charity. An Angel was sent to help the dying girl and defend her from

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the demons, yet Satan would not yield up his prey. The Mother of fair love and of holy hope (Eccles. xxiv. 24) lay prostrate before our Lord and said—'Lord, God of mercy, behold me lying on the ground like a poor worm; punish me and afflict me, but let me not see this soul, which has received the first-fruits of Thy Blood, become a trophy of the hatred and malice which the infernal serpent bears to Thy people.' Our Lord did not yet answer, that the zeal of our Lady might shine the more gloriously. Then Mary remembered that Eliseus the Prophet sent his servant and his staff in vain to raise the son of the Sunamitess to life, and had been obliged himself to go and touch him (4 Kings iv.). The silence of God seemed to give permission, and she went forth with St. John to the house of the sufferer, which was near the guest-chamber on Mount Sion. On her arrival all the devils took flight. She went to the dying girl, called her by name, took her hand, and spoke to her words of sweetness and of life. The girl seemed to revive; she began to breathe, and rousing herself from a deadly lethargy, related what had happened, and the Queen of the Apostles said—'The woman who deceived you is your enemy the devil. I have come from the Most High to give you life; return to the true faith which you once embraced, acknowledge with all your heart that my Son is the true God, the Redeemer Who

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died on the Cross for the salvation of the world. Adore Him, call upon Him, and beseech Him to forgive you all your sins.' Our Lady's words, and the grace which she won for this poor sinner, converted her. She wept, and begged the Mother of Mercy to protect her in her present peril, promising to obey her in all things. Mary helped her to make acts of faith and contrition, to prepare for confession and the other sacraments, and then summoned the Apostles to administer them. The happy penitent, calling on Jesus and Mary, made acts of love and contrition, and breathed her last in the arms of her Protectress, who had spent two whole hours by her bedside to keep the devil from returning. The graces obtained by Mary's prayers were so great that this soul went straight to Heaven, delivered at once from the guilt and the penalty of sin."*

St. Joseph is the patron of a good death, and for hundreds of years he has won for the dying the graces that open Paradise. Shall we not imitate the zeal of the Holy Family for souls in their agony? At least let us put them under their mighty protection, and gain by our prayers eternal consolations for the most afflicted of mankind.

* Mary d'Agreda, *La Cité Mystique*, pt. iii., liv. vii., ch. x., n. 160—167.

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FEBRUARY.

FEAR AND HEAVINESS.

Spiritual Reading.

ST. MARK tells us that our Lord began to fear and to be heavy. His human nature feared His approaching Passion, though He Himself willed to bear it. He feared His Father's severity, He feared the devil's malice, He feared our sins which lay upon Him as a heavy burden. By this fear our fears are soothed, sanctified, and consoled, and we are taught to prepare for death. Many of the Martyrs met suffering cheerfully; but Jesus began His Passion in heaviness and depression, without sensible ardour or energy, that He might expiate the guilty reluctance of some Christians, might console others in their involuntary heaviness, and might give to each of us the strength we need.

Meditation.

I. Consider that the law of love does not destroy, but perfects, the law of fear. It succeeds it as manhood succeeds childhood, or as the fruit succeeds the flower. To produce the fruits of life, love must be grafted on fear; the New Law is not the contradiction or annihilation of the Old Law, but rather its flowering and development. Filial piety makes us not

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only love our father, but also fear to offend him; and the same grace which gives us the love of God, gives us also His fear. O Agonising Heart of Jesus, by the merits of Thy fear, make me fear to displease Thee, let the terror of the judgments of God be a dart to pierce my flesh!

He, Who is by nature the Son of the Eternal and Almighty God, trembles before the anger of His Father for the sins of others; and should not we, who are only His children by adoption, fear His vengeance on our own sins? David, the figure of our Lord, prays—*Confige timore tuo carnes meas* (Psalm cxviii. 120). Pierce Thou with Thy fear, not only my heart, my will, my soul, but my body, my flesh, and my bones, my whole being: that I may be afraid of Thy judgments. Make me afraid during my life, that I may be less afraid in my agony! Fill me with Thy fear, that I may have compassion on the fearful and may know how to console them!

II. Consider that a desire for more suffering was the cause of the heaviness of Jesus in His Agony, and a long-continued Prayer was its effect. But our heaviness comes from spiritual sloth, from indolence, and from our too easy ways. Thousands of Christians are deficient in vigour and activity in God's service, and are indifferent regarding their salvation. We are quick and ready when it is a question of our own pleasure, of anything that gratifies our

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passions, or promotes our temporal interests; but when we must conquer self, or practise some virtue, or follow our Master in the path of devotion and self-denial, how slow and dull we are! How rarely we undertake, how much more rarely accomplish, a work of mercy, or an enterprise that requires zeal! With what coldness and reluctance we engage in anything that is contrary to our natural inclinations!

When weariness and heaviness weigh us down we seem barely able to drag ourselves along in the path of duty, we discontinue our exercises of piety, we omit or shorten our prayers, we become indifferent and slothful in all we have to do. How many sins of omission are daily caused by the wish to avoid a few moments of weariness! How many positive faults we commit in our endeavour to dissipate it in unlawful ways! The time we give to prayer and to God's service seems to us long and tiresome; while we are ready to spend whole hours and days in vain conversation, light reading, dangerous society, amusements, and banquets. We lose our time and our rest in pleasures which may perhaps lead even to the loss of our soul; we shrink from everything that gives us pain, we do only what pleases us—what a contrast between our conduct and that of our Agonising Lord, Who in the midst of His sorrows and heaviness prolonged His Prayer, in order that our lives might be more

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holy, our death more peaceful, our eternity more happy!

III. Consider that death being an expiation, God has seen fit to surround it with fears, so that our sacrifice may be at once more painful and more meritorious. Death was so fearful to our Lord Himself, that but for a miracle of almighty power He would have died of terror. But I seldom think of death, and when I do, it is in a formal way, without any fear. Yet what cause I have to tremble when I remember my sins and my ingratitude to God, my misspent time, my lost opportunities of doing good! When my last hour comes, how terrible even my sins of omission will appear!

The bitter agony I have so often deserved, though now kept out of view by my thoughtlessness and insensibility, and my occupation with the things of the world, may then come upon me. Then I shall say with David, *Non est pax ossibus meis a facie peccatorum meorum* (Psalm xxxiv. 4). There is no more peace, or calm, or quiet for my soul, or my body, or my bones, the most firm and solid portion of my being, when I think of one of my sins, much less when I think of them all together. Oh, that the agony of fear and of heaviness may at last expiate the rebellions of my flesh, and may now in its prospect outweigh my evil inclinations, drive me to take refuge in the Agonising Heart of Jesus, and make me

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have a more apostolic charity for those who are each day in their agony.

Saints and Monks and Priests have followed the example of our Divine Master, in meeting all that is contrary to nature. They have welcomed, and even sought out, the lowest, most irksome, and repulsive offices of charity. But I look for some satisfaction even in my care of the poor and sick and dying; I cannot resign myself to what is wearisome; I cannot get over the revulsion of nature in certain cases. O Agonising Heart of my Saviour, Thou hast rescued me from the Evil One, Thou hast won me for God and for Heaven. By Thy weariness and heaviness, so patiently borne, grant that I may generously accept mine, and may gain conversion and salvation for sinners in their agony.

Practice.

For this intention say the prayer, "O most merciful Jesus." Pray for the salvation of the heathen and idolators who are to die to-day. Pray to our Lady of Consolation for all those who are bowed down by heaviness, or fear, or any trouble. Recommend the dying to their Guardian Angels, who are invisible missionaries, and to the Archangel St. Michael, who presents all souls to the Sovereign Judge.

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Example.

The holy Angels take such pleasure in seeing us assist the dying that they have often visibly aided in this holy work. There is a book by Father Coret, called *The Guardian Angel of the Dying*. St. Philip Neri used to encourage the Religious of the Order called the Ministers of the Sick, by telling them that he had seen Angels suggest to one of them the words he was to say to a dying person.*

At Rome, one night in the year 1596, a very beautiful youth called two of the disciples of St. Camillus of Lellis to come to an agonising person. They set off at once, and tried to keep up with him, that they might ask further information, but, in spite of their efforts, he was always in advance. When they arrived at the house, the youth turned, shewed them an open door, saying, "Go in, you will find the dying man," and immediately disappeared. They went upstairs, passed through two dark, empty rooms into a third, lighted by a little hanging lamp, where they found an old grey-haired man, quite alone, in bed. A strange shudder passed over the two Priests, but they knelt down to begin their ministry. Immediately they saw three fearful silent spectres with flaming eyes. At this sight they rose up, seized the crucifix, held it before the eyes of the dying man, and

* Bacci, *Vita di S. Filippo Neri*, lib. i., cap. vii., n. 9.

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exhorted him to call on Jesus and Mary, and St. Michael the Archangel. The three infernal phantoms were put to flight by these holy names, but the old man, who was unable to speak, trembled and seemed like one before the tribunal of God awaiting the final sentence, and his face was covered with great drops of cold sweat. After a quarter of an hour he cast a look of love on the crucifix, heaved a great sigh, as if he had gained the victory over his enemies, and fell asleep joyfully in the Lord. The Fathers did not like to leave his body unwatched, and were going to look for some neighbour, when they noticed a half-open door leading from the dead man's room. They went through it, and found an old woman asleep on a little straw chair. She awoke and could not understand the presence of the Fathers, as she had not sent for them. In answer to their questions, she told them that she did not know the young man who had summoned them, that the old man was a stranger who had come to Rome on business, that no one had visited him during his illness, which he had borne with admirable patience and a special devotion to his Guardian Angel. The Ministers of the Sick could not doubt that it was his Guardian Angel who had led them there.

A lady, at Rome, had been present more than once when the Fathers of this Order were assisting the dying. She had been so struck by

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their zeal and their holy exhortations, that she made them promise to be with her in her last hours. Some months afterwards, being at the point of death, she sent to claim the fulfilment of their promise. But at that time there were not many of these Religious in Rome, and when her messenger arrived all were absent from the monastery, engaged in assisting the dying, in hospitals and at their own houses. No one could therefore be sent, and the lady's name was merely added to the list of the dying. After three days had passed, some of the Religious went to inquire if she were still alive, and were told that she had just breathed her last. The people of the house loaded them with thanks for having come every day and assisted the sick person with the greatest charity to the last moment. They thought this was said to mortify them, and began to make their excuses, but they were soon convinced that it was otherwise. Two men in habits like those of the disciples of St. Camillus, with their red crosses on their breasts, had visited the lady each day, and spoken of heavenly things with surpassing eloquence. Their zeal and piety were such that they did not seem to belong to this earth. The Fathers, who knew that none of their Community had been there, were full of wonder and thankfulness at the goodness of God; for they now felt assured that He

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had sent two of His Angels to supply their place.*

O Agonising Heart of Jesus, let me be a guardian angel to the dying, and an angel of consolation to the afflicted !

MARCH.

MORTAL SADNESS.

Spiritual Reading.

Our Lord said to the three Disciples whom He took apart with Him, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death" (St. Matt. xxvi. 37; St. Mark xiv. 34). This sadness was caused by His Passion, by the uselessness of His sufferings, by the ingratitude of the Jews and the judgments to come upon them, by the treachery of Judas, the flight of the Disciples, and the affliction of Mary. Sorrow weighed upon His Soul, it reached His inmost being, it affected His reasonable will, though it was unable to dim His intelligence. Jesus was sorrowful until the moment when He went down to the gates of death; He was sorrowful like those who are going to die, sorrowful in the lower part of His

* Cicatelli, *Vita del V. P. Camillo de Lellis*, lib. iii., cap. vii.

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human nature even unto death, sorrowful till the death He desired was accomplished.

Meditation.

I. Compare the causes of our Saviour's sorrows with the causes of your sorrows. He had great reason for His sorrows, but yours are often without a cause, or for merely temporal matters, concerning fortune or honour; you are grieved by anything which wounds your self-love, by a contradiction, by a change of weather, by any slight indisposition, or by any spiritual temptation or trial. Jesus is sorrowful on account of the evil done by sin; but we often glory in our greatest faults; and even feel a secret joy at seeing others fall into the same. Jesus is sorrowful because of the troubles of His enemies, but we are glad when misfortunes come upon those whom we do not love, or upon our rivals; their failures and disappointments are welcome to us, their sorrows are a comfort to us, and their humiliations are a satisfaction to our vanity. If we shed tears at the death of our relations and friends, they spring from selfishness rather than devotion; we weep because we have lost the presence, and counsel, and help of one whom we loved, not because he has suffered the pains of death, or is now undergoing those of Purgatory. Jesus is sorrowful because death is delayed; but nothing

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causes us so much sorrow as its approach. We wish for immortality, but we refuse death, which is to open its door to us. We would choose an earthly immortality, an immortality of fame and fortune, not the immortality of a holy and spiritual life in God's presence. Therefore, we are troubled at the approach of death. O Agonising Heart of our good Master, let us share Thy sadness, that we may also share Thy blessed immortality. Those only will be conformed to Thee in Thy glory who have been conformed to Thee in Thine Agony, who have been crucified with Thee, who have borne the image of Thy moral sufferings, even more than that of Thy fearful death.

II. Compare the intensity of our Saviour's sorrow with the weakness of your own. But for a miracle of almighty power, He would have died of grief, and penitent sinners have been known to die of contrition. Alas! how feeble is my sorrow for my sins. So little do I excite myself to contrition, that it would seem as if I feared I might have too much. Even in my preparation for confession, it is the part that occupies me least. The overwhelming sorrow of the God-Man was on account of the sins of others, but how cold and indifferent I am in making satisfaction or asking pardon for them! How much greater is my sorrow for some temporal evil than even for my own sins. The loss of health, or limb, of fortune or liberty,

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would grieve me far more than the loss of my God, or my own separation from the Body of Jesus Christ. My penitence here is much less than it will be in Purgatory. You, holy suffering souls, whose hearts are wrung with contrition and agony in that furnace, obtain for me the grace of a sorrow like yours.

Sorrow did not get the better of our Divine Master, or make Him depart from His purpose. But we are driven to and fro by its blast. We no longer see what we have seen, or will what we have willed; our strongest resolutions waver and fail. We are the slaves of our changing feelings. Sometimes affliction even deprives us of our strength, or shortens our life, for as St. Paul tells us, the sorrow of the world worketh death: *Sæculi autem tristitia mortem operatur* (2 Cor. vii. 10). It takes away our powers of mind and body at the very moment that we most need them, it brings us down, it destroys our life. Do we drive away this sorrow of the world by prayer, according to the council of the Apostle St. James? *Tristatur aliquis vestrum? Oret* (James v. 13). Do we pray to the Agonising Heart of our Saviour, sorrowful unto death, to heal our sorrows?

III. Compare the duration of our Saviour's sorrows with the duration of yours. He was sorrowful until a complete victory had been gained over the repugnance of His human nature. Does your sorrow continue until the

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death of the old man? or even until he is mortified and defeated, and brought into subjection? Would it not rather be a grief to you to make the persevering effort that is necessary in order to bring your inferior part into that subjection to reason, and your reason into that subjection to God, which constitute your perfection?

Our Lord willed that His sorrow should continue until the separation of His Soul and Body. But we try to put an end to ours, even to that sorrow which is according to God, and which promotes our salvation by working steadfast penance (2 Cor. vii. 10). We are always afraid lest it last too long, we try to turn our eyes from it, sometimes we even seek the distraction of forbidden pleasures. I, a sinner, have tried to make myself deaf to remorse, to stifle the reproaches of conscience, and to escape the pain of contrition. Oh, what a burden is sorrow, and how hard to bear, unless we can lean on the Agonising Heart of Jesus!

The sorrows of the Son of God were all at an end when His Soul and Body were re-united in the glory of the Resurrection. Will our sorrows end with death, and the grave, and the resurrection? Shall we not have to go to Purgatory, and expiate sins which we might have expiated on earth? How many souls, even Christian souls, daily fall into hell, where their worm

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never dieth, and their tears are eternal! The resurrection will but increase the torments of the lost, by making the body share them with the soul. Let me then be sorrowful unto death, that I may not be sorrowful after death. Let me be sorrowful until the end of time, that I may not be sorrowful throughout all eternity. I will help forward the admirable Association of the Agonising Heart of Jesus, which seeks to preserve eighty thousand souls every day from an eternity of sadness.

Practice.

Say a fervent prayer to save from eternal sorrow those who are dying to-day. Pray specially for the agonising who know Jesus Christ, but who have not received baptism, and do not look to Him as their Saviour—that is, for Mahometans and Jews. Invoke St. Camillus de Lellis, who with his disciples worked and prayed most successfully for the salvation of the dying. Recommend to his care those who are brought low and near to death by their sorrows.

Example.

St. Camillus de Lellis, Founder of the Order of Ministers of the Sick, was distinguished by his heroic charity towards the sick and dying. Before he even thought of establishing a new Congregation, or felt himself called to the

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Priesthood, he used to serve them in the hospitals. At his meals he used generally to put a death's-head on the table, in order to remind him of the vanity of the present life, and of the object of his ministry. He was much grieved by seeing that even Priests often forsook the dying in their agony. He considered it the greatest calamity to be thus abandoned, and did what he could to remedy it by often spending whole nights with the dying. This zeal for their salvation suggested to him the idea of instituting an Order of Clerks Regular, who should devote themselves with maternal care and affection to the sick. He said his first Mass on the 13th of June, 1584, and in September the same year, the Congregation was founded. His special care was to make dying persons receive the sacraments in good time, and God often gave him a supernatural knowledge of the state of their souls, and of the nearness of their death. The Saint used to exhort them to make a good confession, to summon the Priest, and take care that the holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction were administered. On different occasions, when every one else believed that a person's recovery was almost complete, he foresaw his approaching death, and lost no time in leading him to prepare for it.

The charity of Camillus was not confined to the sick in hospitals. He would say to his

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disciples that hospitals were like the Mediterranean, but that private houses where people were dying were like the vast and unfathomable ocean beyond. He used to quicken their zeal and compassion by such words as the following: "Remember that you have been called by God to be the advocates and defenders of the patrimony of Jesus Christ, to Whom belong all the souls He has redeemed by His Blood. Remember that the demons do not sleep, and that they gather in numbers round every dying person, to draw him down to perdition. Remember that yours is an angelic ministry, for the Angels themselves come to the aid of the dying, and teach you what you ought to say to them. Oh, let us willingly sacrifice our sleep, and bear any kind of suffering for love of the dying. Here are our matins, here is our cross, a cross which we must bear willingly, instead of dragging it along like the Cyrenean."

The example of the Saint was more eloquent than his words, night and day he was with the dying, even when himself suffering from old age, sickness, and an incurable wound in the leg. The inclemency of the weather never cooled his ardour, he used to climb dark and dangerous stairs, and often met with serious injuries; several times when going through the streets at night, he fell with such force that he seemed to be dead, but a few hours after he was again with his dear sick people. More

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than once he went forth in the middle of the night, in the worst possible weather, to relieve one of his disciples who was assisting at a death-bed. One night, when the rain was falling in torrents, Camillus was summoned from his monastery near the Pantheon to visit a dying person at the gate of the city of Rome leading to St. Paul's. He lost no time in going, and though drenched with rain remained till morning, thinking of nothing but preparing this soul to meet God. The effect of his simple and fervent words were marvellous, and people wished for his presence at their death-beds, as if it were a token of predestination and salvation. In many cases, in answer to the prayer of the Saint, the life of a dying person was prolonged, or his reason restored, so as to enable him to make his peace with God.*

Dear Associates of the Holy Agony, or of the Agonising Heart, who visit the sick and prepare them to die well, you are carrying on the holy work of St. Camillus.

* Cicatelli, *Vita del V. P. Camillo de Lellis*, l. i., capp. vii., viii., xiii.; l. iii., capp. v., vi.

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APRIL.

THE CHALICE OF BITTERNESS.

Spiritual Reading.

JESUS withdrew a little way from His Disciples and fell on His face on the ground, and three times prayed in the same words—"My Father, if it be possible" (St. Matt. xxvi. 39); "All things are possible to Thee" (St. Mark xiv. 36); "Father, if Thou wilt, remove this chalice from Me" (St. Luke xxii. 42). This prayer expresses at once a repugnance and a desire which our Saviour felt. In order to expiate our guilty repugnances and desires He desired to suffer and shed His Blood for us, He desired to see us follow His example and drink the chalice of bitterness, but He shrank from enduring so cruel and shameful a death; He shrank from the judgments which would fall on His murderers the Jews; He shrank from dying for those who would not be saved; He shrank from the sight of the final impenitence and damnation of sinners.

Meditation.

I. Our sins are a chalice of bitterness, which Jesus would fain have removed from Him. But alas! it is always before Him, for we are always sinning. Each sin I commit is a drop of gall which the Son of God must drink. When shall

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I do for Him as much as I do every day for others? When shall I try to spare Him this grief, as I try to spare my friends any suffering? Far from having any consideration for my Saviour, I often add to the bitterness of His chalice by refusing Him the consolation for which He longs, of doing good to my soul. Many men are scandalised by His sufferings, and therefore are the worse for them. The Jews fall on this stone and are broken; the heathen reject Christianity because they despise the Crucified; even among ourselves how many would-be wise men deny His Divinity, because they see in Him the Man of Sorrows and do not understand Him. The Agonising Heart of our good Master was pierced by the thought —"My Passion will repel souls whom I wish to draw to Me; it will cause the ruin of those whom I long to save."

Heretics, on the contrary, presume so far on the value and efficacy of the Passion that they imagine they need do nothing to gain Heaven; they deceive themselves with the idea that good works on their part are an insult to the merits of their Redeemer, that faith by itself is sufficient, and that provided they believe and have some religious feeling, they are sure to be saved, without any effort or act of their own. At the sight of these presumptuous souls our Saviour said to Himself—"My generosity in drinking the chalice of bitterness to destroy sin will lead

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men to sin the more." Do we not sometimes make this chalice more bitter when we rest satisfied with the state of dying persons, who have only faith, instead of endeavouring, by our prayers and sufferings, by our visits and good works, to add to that faith, charity and sanctifying grace?

II. The damnation of a multitude of souls was a chalice of bitterness which our Lord besought His Father to remove from Him and from us. Who can conceive His love for a soul? Even the price He has paid for it does not give us an adequate idea, for His love is immeasurably greater than even His suffering. He would go through His Passion again every day to save a soul. Yes, for a single one of those souls who die each day, the only Son of God would bear the Agony in the Garden, the humiliations in Jerusalem, the death on Calvary, yet a thousand times. And can I be unwilling to suffer, or to labour, or to pray for the salvation of poor souls in their agony?

Before the eyes of our Saviour passed the countless souls who, day by day, through the long course of centuries, would persevere in evil, would determine to hate Him, and would fall into the abyss where love can never enter, where hatred to God and His Christ becomes eternal. The voices of millions and millions rose from Hell, saying—"O Christ, drink the chalice of love for us, and we will drain the

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chalice of hatred for Thee! The more Thou hast loved us, the more will we hate Thee throughout eternity!" And while the bitter waves lashed the Agonising Heart of Jesus from all sides, while the wormwood and vinegar and gall were poured into the chalice which he was to drink to the very dregs, His loving eyes turned to me, hoping to find in me a faithful helper, a true companion. Alas! in what state did He see me? Ready to fall into the abyss of perdition, perhaps drawing others towards it. As sanctifying grace is the seed of glory, so mortal sin is the beginning of damnation. What have I done or suffered to keep myself and others from so great a peril?

III. Our Agonising Lord did not choose His own chalice; He desired, He accepted, He drank the one His Father gave Him (St. John xviii. 11). Do we prefer infirmities and troubles sent by our Lord to our self-chosen mortifications? The more He loves us, the more does He send us of that which He received from His Father, more of interior or exterior trial, in which self-love finds no food, and in which those around us see no merit. He sends us the chalice as He Himself received it —full of virtue for the salvation and sanctification of souls. How many souls have been saved and sanctified by that chalice of bitterness which Jesus drank? How many we should save if we drank the cup of pain, humiliation, and

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suffering which the Master of the Feast passed on to us!

Jesus has Himself drunk that chalice before giving it to us, and if we but fixed our eyes on Him, our dismay and shrinking from trouble would be at an end. He would have us receive it as He did. What is our practice? The cup of grief, humiliation, and suffering is the portion of the criminal; do we drink it to execute judgment on ourselves, to expiate all our faults? The cup of grief, humiliation, and suffering is a wholesome draught, made ready by the wise Physician of our souls; are we not apt to refuse the only remedy that can cure us? The cup of grief, humiliation, and suffering is the invigorating cup of charity; do we generously drink, to show our brethren that we love them enough to take the bitterness for our share, and to leave them the sweetness of life?

Practice.

Offer your afflictions and trials for the agonising of this day. Pray especially for the heretics and schismatics who are to die to-day. Invoke St. Joseph, the glorious patron of a good death, who lived with Jesus and often partook of His chalice. Animate your courage by the contemplation of Jesus in His Agony, and of the afflicted and patient souls who reflect His image.

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Example.

Saint Elizabeth of Hungary drank the cup of bitterness to the dregs on the day that she heard of the death of her virtuous husband, Duke Louis of Thuringia. M. de Montalembert gives the following description of her grief:—"His whole family and country were filled with consternation at the tidings of the Duke's death, and some pious and prudent men were most anxious as to the consequences for the young mother, who did not yet know she was a widow. Sophia herself felt a maternal tenderness for her who had been so dear to her son; she gave the strictest orders that no one should let her daughter-in-law know of the blow which had fallen upon her, and used every precaution to ensure their fulfilment. But when a suitable time had elapsed after the birth of her child, it became necessary to tell the tender and faithful wife of her bereavement, and the Duchess Sophia herself undertook this sad mission. She went to her daughter-in-law's apartment, accompanied be several noble and discreet matrons. Elizabeth received them with respect and affection, and without an idea of the object of their visit, begged them to take seats near the bed on which she lay. When they were seated, the Duchess Sophia said—'Take courage, beloved daughter, and do not let yourself be troubled by what has happened to my son, your husband,

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by the will of God, to which, as you know, he entirely submitted himself.' Seeing her mother-in-law perfectly calm, Elizabeth did not suspect the extent of her misfortune, and supposing that her husband had been taken prisoner, she said—'If my brother is a prisoner, with the help of God and our friends he will soon be ransomed. My father, I am sure, will assist us, and I shall soon be consoled.' But Duchess Sophia answered—'Dear daughter, be patient, and take this ring which he has sent you, for, alas for you! he is dead.' 'Ah! Madame,' cried the young Duchess, 'what do you say?' 'He is dead,' said the mother. Elizabeth became white and then red, and letting her arms fall on her knees, she clasped her hands violently together, and said, in a half-choked voice—'O Lord God! Lord God! now the whole world is dead to me, and every joy.' Then she rose up distracted with grief, and ran through the halls and galleries of the castle, crying out—'He is dead, dead, dead!' She only stopped in the dining-hall, where she rested against a wall and burst into tears. She was almost beside herself. The Duchess Sophia and the other ladies followed her, made her sit down, and tried to console her. But she began to weep and sob with the greatest violence, saying, in broken words—'Now I have lost all. O my dearest brother, O friend of my heart, O my good and pious husband, so you

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are dead and have left me in misery! How can I live without you? Poor forsaken widow that I am! May He who never leaves the widow and orphan console me. O God, comfort me! O my Jesus, strengthen me in my weakness!' Her women came to lead her back to her apartments; she tottered along with their help, but when she reached her room she fell on her face on the floor. They raised her up, and her tears and lamentations burst forth afresh."*

Soon after this, the holy widow was driven from the castle with her children, and reduced to the greatest misery by the ingratitude and cruelty of men. When the bones of Duke Louis were brought back by the Crusaders, they opened the coffin and let her look at the remains of her husband. The grief and love that filled her heart can be weighed by none save by Him who reads the hearts of all the children of men. All the sorrow of the first moment of bereavement was renewed. She threw herself on the remains and kissed them tenderly; she shed such floods of tears, and was so overwhelmed with sorrow, that the Bishop and the noblemen who were present tried to calm her. But she remembered God, and then her strength returned. "I thank Thee, O Lord," she said, "that Thou hast

* De Montalembert, *Histoire de Sainte Elizabeth de Hongrie*, ch. xvii.

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heard the prayer of Thy servant, and fulfilled my great desire of seeing the remains of him who was so dear to me and to Thee. I thank Thee for this merciful consolation to my afflicted and desolate heart. He offered himself, and I offered him to Thee for the defence of Thy Holy Land, and I do not recal the sacrifice, although I loved him with all the powers of my heart. Thou knowest, O my God, how I loved my husband, who loved Thee so well; Thou knowest that if Thy mercy had allowed me to enjoy his sweet presence, I would rather have had it than all the joys of this world; Thou knowest that I would gladly have lived with him in poverty all my life long, begging my bread with him from door to door, merely for the happiness of being with him, if Thou hadst permitted it to be so, O my God! Now I give him up, and give myself up, to Thy will. And I would not, if I could, give but one hair of my head to bring him back, unless it were Thy will, O my God."*

* De Montalembert, *Histoire de Sainte Elisabeth de Hongrie*, ch. xxi.

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MAY.

RESIGNATION.

Spiritual Reading.

JESUS in His Agony said to His Divine Father, "Not My will, but Thine be done" (St. Luke xxii. 42); "Not what I will, but what Thou wilt" (St. Mark xiv. 36); "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. xxvi. 39). Resignation differs from conformity, inasmuch as it implies suffering; resignation is submission, conformity is likeness; resignation may be perfect upon earth, but our conformity cannot be perfect except in Heaven. Both are full of merit, and both are carried to their highest degree in our Saviour's words. For when He yielded Himself up to His Father's will, with regard to the matter and manner, the essentials and accessories of His sufferings, He knew that He gave Himself up also to the will of Judas and Pilate, and the rest of His foes. The *fiat* of our Saviour in His Agony is full of energy and power, like the *fiat* of God in Creation, like the *fiat* of Mary in the Incarnation, and like the promulgation of the Law on Mount Sinai.

Meditation.

We allege the sensibility of our feelings as a reason to exempt us from the practice of resignation. But is our sensibility equal to that of

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the God-Man, the Virgin's Son, Who was conceived by the operation of the Holy Spirit? All through His Agony and Passion His Divinity was hidden that His Humanity might suffer; but that Humanity submitted, resigned, and conformed Itself to the will of God in trials inexpressibly greater than ours. It was the Human Nature in its Agony that resigned Itself in the Garden of Olives. Does not His example put us to shame? What objection can we make when we look upon it? "I admit," says Massillon, "that some hearts are peculiarly tender and sensible to sorrow; but this sensibility is allowed to remain to increase the merit of their sorrows, not to excuse murmuring and rebellion. The Gospel does not condemn the feeling of sorrow, but its unlawful indulgence. The more sensible we are to sorrow, the more sensible ought we also to be to the consolations of religion. The same tenderness which opens a heart to the load of grief, ought also to open it to the support and consolation of grace. A good heart has peculiar resources wherewith to meet affliction, because grace has such ready access to it. Immoderate grief proceeds rather from impatience than from goodness of heart. Those who cannot submit to God, or take any comfort in their sorrow, are savage and desperate, rather than tender and sensitive."*

* Massillon, *Sermon sur les Affections*, pt. i.

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II. We excuse our want of resignation by our small amount of virtue. But whose fault is it that it is so small? Has not Jesus in His Agony suffered enough to merit grace to make us holy? Is not the share which He gives us in His Agony, itself a means chosen by His love for our increase in virtue? A person who has met with reverses of fortune will say, "Age and infirmity confine me to a bed of pain, in a squalid abode, where, day and night, the remembrance of the past makes my present position more irksome. If I were a Saint, I could be resigned, but this trouble after so many others makes my cup overflow; is it not more than ordinary virtue can bear?" Again —"When we exhort people whom God has afflicted, to use their passing afflictions to gain Heaven, they answer that in their state of depression they are unable to do anything; that the contradictions amidst which they live, instead of recalling them to their duty, tend to sour and irritate them, and that one must be quiet to think about God. What is the truth? Afflictions make all the duties of religion more easy; hatred of the world is easy when the world is wearisome to us; detachment from creatures is easy when we find them fail us; we learn to do without pleasures when it is difficult to have them; when we have little consolation from man we can turn to God and desire the good things of Heaven; in short,

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affliction facilitates the fulfilment of every obligation imposed on us by our faith. The Church has never been more pure and fervent than in times of affliction; the ages of suffering and persecution were ages of glory and zeal."*

III. Another excuse which we make for our want of resignation is the singular nature of our trials. "Nothing is more common than to hear the afflicted justify their complaints and murmurs by the greatness and the peculiarity of their afflictions. We always make out that our crosses are not like other people's crosses, and lest we should be condemned by the example of their constancy and their faith, we look for differences in our misfortunes to justify our different dispositions and conduct. We exaggerate all our own concerns. The idea of being singular flatters our vanity while it seems to sanction our murmurs. The troubles of other people are as nothing in our eyes."† And yet our Lord's fearful sufferings were for others! What are our agonies compared to His? In His Agony alone we find at once immensity and singularity. Let us meditate upon it, and learn that the disciple fares much better than the Master. Yet the Master is resigned, while the disciple exaggerates his troubles and never ceases his complaints. O how much we need to go to school at Gethsemani, that we may

* Massillon, *Sermon sur les Affections*, pt. iii.
† *Ibid*, pt. ii.

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learn from the Agonising Heart of Jesus to be resigned in our sorrows!

IV. We are not resigned because our sufferings are, we say, incompatible with the duties of our station. God could not in justice send me an illness, says one person, because my health is necessary to my family for their existence, and to myself for the practice of virtue. God treats me too harshly, says another, in taking from me my child, or one who was my sole consolation, my hope, and my support. Another is too much weighed down to think of God, yet who is weighed down like our Saviour in His Agony? Who has such sufferings as His betrayal, His loneliness, His Passion, and His Cross? Another imagines that he would be resigned under any trial except his present one, which he did not choose; he asks for a change of suffering, like a sick person who thinks he would be better in another air, or a different position, but Jesus in His Agony asked for no other chalice than the one His Father gave Him; He accepted it even the more willingly because it was not of His own selection. "People deceive themselves, and justify their selfish and earthly prayers, by confusing the interests of their salvation with those of their self-love. In chronic maladies we fancy that if God restored us to health we should be less lukewarm in His service, more fit for good works, more ready

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to attend to the concerns of eternity, and therefore we constantly pray to be delivered from our illness. When misfortune has come upon us, we imagine that if our circumstances were prosperous we should help the afflicted, encourage the deserving, promote the interests of society, and protect weakness and innocence from injustice and oppression, and so we allow our minds to be set on the restoration of our earthly goods. When business harasses us, we think a more quiet situation would give us leisure for the work of our salvation, and therefore we constantly say to our Lord—'O God, do not forsake those who would serve Thee in and by Thy gifts.' These are delusions; the condition in which Providence has placed us is always the one best suited to promote our salvation. The more it is against our natural inclination, the more means of sanctification will grace find in it."* Let us then be resigned to sickness, to poverty, to all kinds of losses and troubles, so that we may promote our own salvation and the salvation of those dear to us. Our conformity to the will of God is a prayer which will gain fresh consolation for the sorrowful, a more peaceful agony and a more holy end for the dying.

* Massillon, *II. Sermon sur la Prière*, pt. i.

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Practice.

Pray that the agonising may be completely resigned to death. Pray especially for all Catholics who are to die to-day. Invoke St. Chantal, who was so resigned to the loss of those dear to her, so devoted to the sick, so full of charity for the dying. Recommend all who are to bear great trials to-day to the Agonising Heart of Jesus and the compassionate Heart of Mary, that they may have the grace of holy resignation.

Example.

St. Jane Frances Frémiot de Chantal is an example of resignation under the loss of those we love.

St. Francis of Sales died at Lyons, on the 28th of December, 1622, and his death was for some time kept from the knowledge of the holy Foundress of his Order of the Visitation. When she was at Belley, in one of the monasteries of her Order, it was thought necessary to tell her of it. One of the Nuns gives the following account of the way in which she bore the tidings; "M. Michel Favre, who had been the good Mother's Confessor for eleven or twelve years, knew well that she received the bitterest draughts calmly when they were presented to her in the chalice of God's will; he therefore

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said to her, 'Reverend Mother, we must will what God wills; be so good as to read this letter,' and he gave her the letter which the Bishop of Geneva, of happy memory, brother and successor of our blessed Father, had written to him. This letter told her how God had called the holy Prelate to Himself; and I cannot better give an idea of the solid virtue with which she met the mortal blow than by her own words, written to one of our Mother Superioresses. 'When M. Michel put the Bishop of Geneva's letter into my hand, my heart beat violently; I collected myself, and entered into the holy will of God, being persuaded that this letter contained something very painful. At this moment the words which had been said to me at Geneva, *he is no more*, recurred to me, and this blessed letter showed to me their truth. I fell on my knees, adoring the providence of God in this great affliction. I wept abundantly till after I had received Holy Communion the next morning, yet I found calmness and peace in thinking of the will of God, and of the glory of the blessed one. For God gave me a clear sight of the graces and gifts he had bestowed upon him, and also a most earnest desire to live according to his instructions. Here, my dear daughter, is what your goodness wished to know about me, a poor creature.' A certain Father, seeing her weep, told her that perfect resignation would dry her tears. 'My Father,'

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said she, 'if I knew that my tears were displeasing to God, I would not shed one.' And then by a great effort of self-control she checked them entirely, but the violence done to her nature did her such harm that M. Michel desired her to let them take their course; for, as he told her, the father strikes the child that it may feel the blow, and all that he requires is that it should be submissive under his hand, and this she was to the greatest degree. The evening that the sad news came she was not able to go to supper; the Superior ordered a sweet dish to be made ready for her, but the Sister who made it took salt instead of sugar by mistake. Our good Mother ate half of it without perceiving anything; the Superior afterwards tasted what was left, to see if it was well made. Finding it salt as brine, she asked the Blessed Mother if it had done her harm; but she begged her not to mind it, and said that she was in such a state that nothing was sweet to her except the will of God, nor anything bitter except her grief. She joined the sisters that evening at recreation, but could not say a word."*

In the year 1627, informations regarding the sanctity of Francis of Sales were being taken at Annecy, and one of the Commissioners named by the Holy See was the Archbishop of Bourges,

* *Memoires de la Mère de Chaugy sur la vie et les vertus de Sainte J. F. de Chantal*, pt. ii., ch. xiv.

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only brother of the Foundress of the Visitation. About the same time her only son, the Baron de Chantal fell gloriously in war with the English at the Isle of Rhé. The Bishop of Geneva resolved himself to present this bitter chalice to the blessed mother of so worthy a son; for the Archbishop of Bourges was too much overwhelmed with grief to be able to console another. At the end of the Mass in which she had communicated, his Lordship sent for her to the parlour, and desired the portress to tell our dear Mother de Châtel to be ready in case her assistance should be required. The parlour was full of Commissioners, Priests, and Religious. The Bishop of Geneva said to her, "Reverend Mother, we have news of the war, a sharp encounter has taken place in the Island of Rhé; the Baron de Chantal heard Holy Mass, and went to confession and Communion before going forth——" "And then, my lord," said the noble mother, "he died." The good Prelate's tears made it impossible for him to speak, and all those present were full of sorrow. But this valiant woman alone was calm, she knelt down, and with clasped hands and eyes raised to Heaven, gave free course to her tears, all the while making acts of loving submission to the will of God. We give her own words, written down at the time by Mother de Châtel: "My Lord God," said she, "let me speak to give some relief to my sorrow; what shall I say, my

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God, except that I thank Thee for the honour Thou hast done to my only son by calling Him while he was fighting for the Roman Church?" Then she took a crucifix, and kissing the hands she said, "My Redeemer, I receive this blow with all submission, and I pray Thee to receive this child into the arms of Thine infinite mercy. O my dear son! how happy you are to have sealed with your blood the fidelity of your forefathers to the Roman Church. I think myself blessed, and thank God that I am your mother." Then she turned to our dear Mother de Châtel, and both together said a *De Profundis*. Those present were silent, seeing how wonderfully she was supported, and being themselves full of amazement and sorrow. She rose up, and weeping quietly, said to the Bishop of Geneva, "I assure you that it is more than eighteen months since I felt inwardly drawn to ask it as a favour from God that my son might die in His cause, not in any of the wretched duels into which his friends sometimes drew him." As she spoke, the Archbishop of Bourges came weeping and sighing, so that all who saw him were moved. Our blessed Mother consoled him with her heavenly words, and he said to her, "Dear sister, your resignation makes me afraid. It is worthy of your virtue, but I cannot yet attain to it." Then he spoke in detail of the many good qualities of his nephew, at once soothing and augmenting his grief by these dear

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memories. While the good Archbishop was speaking, our Mother from time to time interrupted him by some pious words. Afterwards she left the parlour and spent a long time in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.*

JUNE.

THE SLEEP OF THE DISCIPLES.

Spiritual Reading.

DURING His Agony in the Garden, Jesus returned three times to His three Disciples, from whom He had withdrawn Himself about a stone's throw, and each time He found them asleep. The first time He had forbidden them to sleep, the second time He tolerated their sleep, the third time He positively permitted it. His goodness, His love, and tenderness increase with His increasing sufferings, and with the most manifest ingratitude or insensibility of His friends. How much less indulgent are we to our sleeping friends! But what a grief it is to us, as well as to Jesus, when our friends are indifferent to our sufferings.

Meditation.

I. Consider our Lord, perfect God and perfect

* *Memoires de la Mère de Chaugy sur la vie et les vertus de Sainte J. F. de Chantal*, pt. ii., ch. xix.

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Man, Who has made our soul His friend, His daughter, His bride, Who watches unceasingly over it, and for it. A father is sometimes awake while his children are quietly sleeping. His anxiety for their welfare, his plans for their future, keep sleep from his eyes: so God wakes while we sleep. Have we faith in His providence? Do we firmly believe that He keeps watch for the salvation, perfection, and glory of our soul? When He seems to be asleep, spite of the tempest which threatens to overwhelm us, do we awake Him like the Apostles, praying—"Lord, save us, we perish" (St. Matt. viii. 25)? or do we lovingly complain like the Psalmist—"Why sleepest Thou, O Lord, and forgettest our want and our trouble? Our soul is humbled down to the dust" (Psalm xliii. 23—25)?

But often, while Jesus our Master and Friend is awake, our soul sleeps the guilty sleep of sin, or the heavy sleep of indifference. The beautiful discourse made by the Son of God after the Last Supper seems but to have disposed the Disciples to sleep. Alas! how many good words and examples set before us in the Church seem to have no effect but to send us to sleep! Our Saviour is watching and interceding for us, not only in Heaven, but also on the altar, where He remains in a small tabernacle as in the Grotto of the Agony; and we, who call ourselves His disciples, do not give our minds even to the prayers by which we speak to Him. Like

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Peter, James, and John, sleeping in the Garden of Olives, we know not what is passing, we do not consider what our Divine Master has suffered for us, we shut our eyes to what He is still doing for us. The sleep of lukewarmness makes us slothful in all exercises of piety; it renews the Agony of Jesus (Apoc. iii. 16). With what energy ought I then to oppose it! And when I find myself falling into an actual fault of this nature, ought not humility at least to waken me? Pride sends a man to sleep and puts vain dreams before his eyes; but humility wakens him and makes him clearly see the truth. O Agonising Jesus, meek and humble of heart, give me Thy meekness, give me Thy humility!

II. Consider the soul and the body. They often sleep while they ought to watch, the one on account of the other. There is a natural sleep—the body prolongs it to the soul's detriment. There is a spiritual sleep in sin—the inclinations and customs of the body keep the soul from casting it off. There is a spiritual sleep, or holy repose, in the grace of God; but the body keeps the soul from enjoying it, by that law of the members and that rebellion of the flesh of which the great Apostle complains (Rom. vii. 23, 24). There is a sweet rest in the Lord, an eternal rest in bliss and glory; the holy and fervent soul would fain take flight to Heaven, but the corruptible body is a load upon the soul (Wisdom ix. 15). Thus the

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companion of the soul, which ought to be its friend, betrays it, or tyrannises over it and brings it into subjection to those lower instincts which lead to the sleep of death. When temptations have assailed my soul, how often has my body been indifferent and heavy! And when my soul has applied itself to prayer and meditation, how often has the body slumbered, or else distracted me! And, again, has not my soul often slept when it ought to have kept watch over my eyes, my ears, my tongue? After all my fair promises and resolutions, it is wearied and disgusted by an hour's watchfulness and attention. When it ought to make a struggle for victory over the body, and to bring it under the control of reason, it sleeps; when it ought to chastise the body, and bring it into subjection (1 Cor. ix. 27), and make it bear the marks of the Lord Jesus (Gal. vi. 17), it sleeps. How little am I like the Spouse in the Canticle, who said, "I sleep, and my heart watches" (Cant. v. 2). While my senses are awake to a thousand dangerous objects, my heart sleeps, because it is without affection and charity; my will sleeps, because it is without strength and energy; my understanding sleeps, because it is indolent and benumbed; my whole soul sleeps, because it has no more feelings, or thoughts, or recollections—it is like a smouldering fire. O Agonising Heart of Jesus, by Thy watchful charity rouse me from my stupor and lethargy!

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III. Consider yourself and your neighbour. Jesus reproaches Peter, the Chief of the Apostles, for being asleep, that He may teach you by word and example how the shepherd ought to watch over his flock, the father over his children, the superior over his inferiors. If we do not watch over those confided to our care, we are like the pilot who sleeps through the storm, like the physician who sleeps while the plague is raging, the sentinel who sleeps on guard, the keeper in charge of house or flock who sleeps while robbers are attacking the house, or the wolf ravaging the sheepfold. How often have you slept when it was your duty to watch? The good Master takes cares of His Disciples, and breaks off His prayer several times to see how they fare; but I sleep when my friends are suffering or unhappy, and even when they are dead or dying. Some of them are tormented in the flames of Purgatory, and I sleep instead of trying to deliver them. Others are about to cross the boundary that divides time from eternity, and I sleep instead of helping them towards Heaven by my prayers and good works. Jesus is suffering Agony again in His agonising members, and I sleep, without thinking of Him or of them. O Lord, give me the charity that prays, and suffers, and works, so that I may watch for those who are each day in their agony!

With regard to His sleeping friends, Jesus

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does not enlarge on His own kindness, or on their ingratitude. He instructs them, and almost excuses them. How differently do I act when I am in want or affliction! I murmur and complain, I accuse my neighbours of want of compassion and generosity towards me; I reproach my friends with ingratitude, forgetfulness, slowness, and selfishness; I speak bitterly of the insensibility of others, and of their indifference to the afflicted who have a claim on their affectionate devotion. Why do I not rather take refuge in the Agonising Heart of my Saviour? Why do I not turn to the God-Man Who suffered like me, and for me, and seek from Him the strength and consolation I need under my trials? Henceforward, if those whom I love leave me alone to bear sorrow, pain, illness, poverty, or persecution, if they do not think of me, or see that I am suffering, if they are insensible like the sleeping Apostles, I will go and look for Jesus in the Grotto, I will fall on the ground beside Him, I will lean upon Him, I will take refuge in His Heart as in the heart of a friend who never sleeps.

Practice.

Pray for those who are in their agony, especially for those who are most forsaken. Above all, watch and pray for the hardened sinners who are to die to-day. Think of your

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friends and neighbours whom you have abandoned in affliction, and do now for them whatever is in your power. Beg St. Elizabeth to intercede for those who are in poverty and neglected by the prosperous, for she never slumbered when the poor, or sick, or unhappy needed her help.

Example.

St. Elizabeth, daughter of the King of Hungary, and widow of the Duke of Thuringia, shows us the Apostolic use which charity can make of affliction.

After having been driven from her castle, separated from her children, forsaken by relations and friends, she spent the little money that was left her in building a hospital for the poor and infirm, the sick and the dying. While she was herself neglected by the great people of the world, her tender compassion for the poor and lowly never failed. "Every day she spent whole hours in dressing their wounds, in taking care of them, and giving them the remedies prescribed; above all, in consoling them by most affectionate exhortations, suited at once to the nature of their suffering and to the spiritual state of each one. She was not only the comforter, but the servant of the poor, and no service was too hard or too vile for her to perform, for she saw in each one the image of the Heavenly Bridegroom of her soul. Her

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special solicitude were for those whose maladies made them the object of disgust to others. She tended them with her own hand, caressed them kindly, and kissed their sores and ulcers. These practices were far from meeting with general approbation, even some pious people thought she was going too far; but she had gained too complete a mastery over herself to be affected by human respect. Meeting a poor beggar one day on her way to church, she brought him home with her, and washed his feet and hands. But on this occasion she felt such a repulsion for the office that she could not help shuddering. She determined to conquer her feelings, and saying to herself, 'Ah, wretched thing, does this disgust you, you must know that it is a most holy draught;' she drank the water she had just used, and then prayed, 'O, my Lord, on the Cross Thou didst drink vinegar and gall; I am not worthy of such a cup, help me to become better.' The dread of contagion made most people shrink with horror from lepers; but this sad state was only an additional claim on her care and tenderness. She washed and bathed them herself, and cut up her curtains and other precious stuffs for their use on leaving the bath; she also made their beds, and did all that was in her power for their comfort. Her compassionate charity was not confined to the bodily necessities of the poor and sick. She never lost sight of their spiritual welfare, she

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constantly gave them good advice, she took care that infants should be baptised as soon as possible, and that the sick should receive the sacraments, not merely at their last hour, but on their arrival in the hospital. Although her example must have added effect to her words, she often met with opposition from those who had been soured by misfortune, or who had long lived in neglect of their religious duties. On such occasions the energy of Christian zeal came to the aid of her habitual gentleness.

The hospital was the chosen resort of her charity, but she used also to visit the poor of Marbourg and its neighbourhood in their wretched cabins, and to distribute meat, bread, flour, and other necessaries. No detail of these poor households escaped her notice, she used to examine the clothes and the beds, that she might supply what was needed. Her jewels, silk veils, and other worldly ornaments, were secretly sold by her orders, and the proceeds were employed in the service of the poor. Not only did she render them every kind of service, but even tried to forestall their wishes. When she met with any whose miseries called for peculiar compassion, or whose devotion made them sacred in her eyes, she would bring them to her own lowly abode, make them eat at her table, and devote herself entirely to them. Amongst others received in this way was a little boy without father or mother, paralytic from his.

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birth, blind of one eye, and also constantly afflicted with dysentery. She was more than a mother to this poor creature, spent whole nights in watching and nursing him, and at the same time comforted him by caresses and tender words. When he died, his place was filled by a young girl, so fearfully disfigured by leprosy that no one in the hospital could bear to see her. But Elizabeth always looked on her with pious respect, as if she saw our Lord Himself under this veil of suffering. Notwithstanding the poor creature's resistance, she used to kneel down before her and take off her shoes and stockings; then she would dress her sores, and give her the necessary remedies. Her affectionate and constant care soon worked a change for the better in this poor child's state. After she had brought her to her own home, Elizabeth herself used to make her bed, and to spend whole hours in playing with her, amusing her, and consoling her by her gentle words."*

* De Montalembert, *Histoire de Sainte Elisabeth de Hongrie*, ch. xxiv.

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JULY.

THE ANGEL OF CONSOLATION.

Spiritual Reading.

If God does not take away our trials in answer to our earnest prayers, at least He sends us some consolation. Jesus prayed, and though He did not prevent the Sweat of Blood, an Angel was sent from Heaven to strengthen Him (St. Luke xxii. 43), and this Angel is well called the Angel of Consolation. The consolation which he offers strengthens the Divine Victim for further suffering, but we seek consolations which may lessen or remove our sufferings. Our Lord receives consolation from Heaven, from a pure spirit, but do not we seek it on earth, and from men? Let us become angels of consolation to Jesus, and let us derive our chief consolation from His Agonies.

Meditation.

I. Let us compare the two gardens. In which garden do we seek our consolation? Our Divine Master went to the Garden of Gethsemani; He prayed while the Disciples slept, and there He found consolation. But when I am in want of consolation, I betake myself to scenes which resemble the Garden

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of Eden by the presence of the forbidden fruit, rather than by the innocence of their inhabitants; I go anywhere where I can find amusement and the whirl of dissipation; I go to assemblies, public walks, and theatres. At least I seek the beauty of flowers, the magnificence of creation, the pleasures of travelling. I ask nature for consolation, and I am as little on my guard as if I were in Paradise before the Fall. When my thoughts revert to that place of delights, my sorrow is not for the sin that excludes us from it, but for the loss of its joys.

I must go to Jesus for true and solid consolation; I must seek Him in His sanctuary, in solitude, at the foot of the Cross; the soil there is hard and barren, but the olive trees are nourished by His Sweat of Blood, and give us the oil of gladness and of grace, which strengthens us for conflicts and agonies. God, Who brings "honey out of the rock, and oil out of the hardest stone" (Deut. xxxii. 13), has always consolations in reserve for those who know how to suffer, who go to Gethsemani or Calvary to gather the blessed fruit which is an antidote to the forbidden fruit. Where can we find better consolation than in being with Jesus in the Garden of Olives, that we may be with Him in Heaven? Is not the joy of the Lord better than all the joys of this world?

II. Let us compare the two angels. From what Angel do we seek consolation? The

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Apostles who made no prayer received no consolation; our Lord is consoled, because He alone sought refuge in the bosom of His Father. I will, then, seek consolation from God. My prayer and resignation, and my struggles against nature, will not be in vain. If He does not send an Angel from Heaven, He will at least send one of the visible angels of earth, a holy Priest, a pious friend, a good Mother or Sister for my consolation. Alas! I seek false friends, whose passions, tastes, and ideas agree with my own. They yield like Eve to temptation, and then are ready to tempt others.

I do not seek solitude, as Jesus did in His Agony, but I prefer a crowd; a crowd of worldlings and flatterers, of men who are like the serpent in the smoothness of their words and the perfidy of their intentions. I let them glide into my heart, but what they leave there is not consolation—it is the venom of impiety, the contagion of murmurs, the cowardice of Disciples who sleep before they forsake their Master. But henceforth, in my despair and sadness I will turn to the friends of God, to holy souls on earth, to the Angels and Saints in Heaven, to Mary, Mother of Jesus and my Mother. They will send me the Angel who comforted my Saviour, who encouraged Him to bear the Agony and Passion which are the salvation of the world. Angels or ministers of

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God, let it be your care to strengthen me, rather than to console me. Strengthen me for fresh conflicts and fresh sufferings; let me never seek those comforters who would take the Cross from my shoulders, but rather those who would keep it firmly there, by giving me strength to bear it longer and in a more holy manner.

III. Let us compare the two chalices. What is the chalice that consoles us? The world has a chalice, and Jesus rejects it; God has a chalice, and Jesus drinks it to the dregs, but at the bottom He finds the sweetest consolation. The world presents its chalice of false delights, the cup of pleasure which, with its deceitful appearances, seduces the heart, intoxicates the soul, makes the senses rebel, and separates us from God by disobedience. This living death and dying life, to use the words of an ancient author, this death which is always living, this life which is always dying, deceive fools by their charms and fair promises, by the golden cup which they hold in their hands, and in which they make them drink till they are drunk.* But when that drunkenness has passed away, they find that they have drunk of the chalice of devils (1 Cor. x. 21), of the cup of the indignation of God (Apoc. xvi. 19), of the cup of dead sleep (Isa. li. 22); they feel that fire and brimstone shall be their portion (Psalm. x. 7).

I am guilty, I have deserved the severest

* *Meditat.*, l. i., cap. xxi. Attributed to St. Augustine.

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punishments, and when I am in need of consolation I will take the cup which the just Judge holds in His hand, which He pours to and fro, and of which all the sinners of the earth shall drink (Psalm lxxiv. 9). But some drink the dregs, and I would not be of the number; others drink the wine, and I would imitate them. The Jews, says St. Augustine, have drunk the dregs, and they have been hardened and lost; the Gentiles have drunk the wine, and they have been converted and justified. I will drink that I may no longer be a sinner; I will drink that I may regain grace, not that I may suffer punishment. This chalice inebriates those who drink it with holy dispositions (Psalm xxii. 5). The Martyrs who died confessing Jesus Christ were so inebriated by it that they no longer knew their friends or relations.* Every day sinners who return to God are inebriated, and filled with sweetness and heavenly consolation. I will, then, drink the chalice of the Lord; it is on the altar, and the Priest is the angel who presents it to me. I will do penance with sinners, I will take part with the just, I will take the chalice of salvation (Psalm cxv. 13), and as I drink I will call upon God and praise Him, and I shall be saved. I will pray, I will suffer, I will labour, to make dying sinners drink of it also. I will do everything in my power that they may receive the Holy Viaticum, Which is

* St. Augustine, *Enarr. in Psalm* lxxiv., n. 12.

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the Great Comforter. O Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, console the living, console the dying, and strengthen us in all our agonies.

Practice.

Offer your Communion for the afflicted and the agonising most in need of support and consolation. Pray especially for sinners who are about to die, and who, even after being reconciled to God, are troubled by remorse or tempted to despair. Go to the afflicted and dying, and speak words of encouragement and consolation to them. Or at least call on the Angel of Consolation, the Angel of the Agony, to come and strengthen the members as he strengthened their Head.

Example.

St. John Francis Regis was an angel of consolation to the sick and the dying. We read in his Life:—"Visiting the sick and assisting the dying were among the occupations he loved best. He used to say that the good we do to sinners during their life is always in danger; we may sow the good seed, but the enemy may sow cockle to choke it. But the good done to the dying is not exposed to human inconsistency or to the wiles of the Evil One; it decides their eternal state. When summoned to hear the confessions of the sick he went without delay,

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and God had given him a special grace to lead them to a holy death. He always began by preparing them for confession. He would watch by them night after night, and never leave them till he had, so to speak, secured their salvation. The sick were always anxious to die in his arms. That he might be ready at a moment's notice, he never took off his clothes at night. God often assisted him, by enlightening him as to the danger of the sick. A young lady, aged twenty-nine, who was much wrapped up in the pleasures of the world, and whose life had been far from edifying, fell ill, and did not think of preparing for death. Regis, after he had given catechism on Quinquagesima Sunday, chanced to pass her house. A secret force stayed his steps, and he remained motionless in a kind of trance in the middle of the street. The sister of the sick person saw him, and told her that Father Regis was there. She was astonished, and sent for him. Almost as soon as he entered the house a special illumination made known to him her danger. He told her of it, and spoke to her with such power that she was deeply touched, and made her confession with every sign of real sorrow. Some moments afterwards she lost consciousness, and the next day she died, leaving all around her convinced that Regis had been sent by God to save her from hell.

"His charity seemed to burn even more

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brightly when poverty was joined to sickness. The most destitute sick were the dearest to him, and the sight of this angel of consolation made them forget all their hardships. Every sorrow was sweetened by his presence, and when sufferers knew he had heard of their condition they were at rest, feeling sure that he would provide the help they needed. No office was too lowly for him. At Puy, as well as in other places, he was often to be seen carrying on his own shoulders beds, palliasses, clothing, and furniture, and he did it with such satisfaction as to make it evident that his faith discerned our Lord in the person of the poor. After a time of famine, the number of the sick in the hospital was so great that they were all crowded together. Regis undertook to alleviate their sufferings; he made collections for them, went about from bed to bed helping and comforting them, without fear of contagion, unwearied by labour, undeterred by the trying tempers of the sick or the bad air of the place; his countenance was ever serene, his heart ever contented, although often he was so worn that he could scarcely stand. Nothing short of heroic courage could have enabled him to devote himself without reserve to occupations so contrary to nature. Those whose maladies were most repulsive had a special claim on the affection of the servant of God. We give an example:—At the end of the village there was a

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poor man, all covered with ulcers and vermin. His state was such that no one could come near him, and accordingly he had to suffer all his miseries without any alleviation. Regis heard of it, went to see him, and wept with compassion at the sight. It would be impossible to imagine all that his charity led him to do for this poor creature; he washed his wounds, got him a bed and linen, and brought him food every day. One day the poor man, wishing to express his gratitude, called Regis his father and deliverer. The Saint was touched, embraced him, and exclaimed—'O dear brother, it is I who have to thank you. I gain more than you do by my little services to you. I do nothing compared with what I ought to do, and wish to do. I only beg as a favour that you will forgive me for having begun so late.'"*

AUGUST.

CONFLICT.

Spiritual Reading.

THE word *agony*, according to its Greek derivation, as well as its acceptation in our language, involves the idea of conflict or struggle. St. Luke uses the word to express our Saviour's state after the Angel had appeared to Him

* Daubenton, *La Vie de St. François Régis*, l. iii.

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(St. Luke xxii. 43). This special Agony, or violent conflict, was a duel between mercy and justice, between the temporal death of the second Adam and the eternal death of all men, between the life of grace and the death of sin. The conflict was prefigured by Jacob's wrestling with the Angel, it lasted as long as the Passion, beginning in Gethsemani and ending on Calvary. Ardent prayers and a Sweat of Blood were the means which the Champion of mercy and of life took to ensure His victory.

Meditation.

I. The whole history of humanity, ever since the fall of our first parents, is a history of agony or conflict. There is a conflict with material things, from which we must gain our food and clothing, and all we want for the body. Is not work an agony to me? Have I constantly made war against my natural indolence? Then there is a conflict of man with man; rival passions and interests lead to dissensions, wars, conquests, the fall of dynasties, the ruin of empires, revolutions of all kinds. Have I the moral strength and firmness never to make the smallest concession to evil or injustice, prejudice or passion? In the struggle between virtue and vice, between the forces which corrupt and lower society and those which elevate and deliver it, whose banner have I followed? What

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has been the amount of my devotion to the good cause; of my ardour for it?

The history of regenerated humanity—that is, of the Church—is again made up of a constant conflict with persecution, idolatry, and impiety from without, and with the rebellions of her subjects within; but in this conflict our Mother, like her Divine Spouse in the Garden of Olives, takes the suffering for herself, and never makes others suffer. Do I help forward or hinder the noble and generous efforts of my Mother? Alas! I am an obstacle in her way. The Church, following the steps of her Divine Lord, has days of agony in which she redoubles her prayers, rouses her sleeping children, pours forth tears, and sweats blood. In such times are we angels of consolation? Do not we sleep while the Church is in agony, praying for us, as Jesus prayed, and watching over us as He watched over His Disciples?

II. The mortal life of the Word made Flesh was a conflict of Agony, which reached its greatest intensity on the Mount of Olives. The life of man upon earth is a warfare (Job vii. 1), the life of a Christian a greater warfare, and the life of a Saint the greatest and most uninterrupted warfare of all, so the life of the God-Man, of Christ, the Saint of Saints, was a warfare in a higher and fuller sense than any other. At His birth He had to encounter the poverty of the manger, Herod's persecutions,

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the exile in Egypt. As He grew up, mental sufferings, Agonies of the Heart, were His portion; He was obliged to labour at a hard and humble trade for His own support and His Mother's. In His public life He had to meet the ignorance and earthliness of His Disciples, the vices and errors of the Jews, all manner of human weakness and misery, and the rage and perfidy of evil spirits. What was His whole suffering life but a wonderful combat, in which He triumphed by apparent defeat? O my Saviour, how little can I bear the appearance of defeat! How I complain of momentary humiliation, of long-continued suffering, of the difficulties of my warfare! O Agonising Heart of Jesus, make my heart like Thine!

Even since His Ascension our Lord has continued to carry on His great conflict, not only by the Sacrament of the Altar, where the fire of His love combats our selfish coldness, and by the grace and truth of which He possesses the fulness (St. John i. 14), but also by all the acts of devotion which He inspires, the Associations which He raises up, the holy enterprises for the glory of God and the salvation of souls which He supports. The Heart of Jesus which Agonised so much on earth ever combats for the triumph of mercy and life. And in these days It has specially taken up the cause of the dying. It is resisting the efforts of unbelievers who wish to die, and to lead others

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to die, in impenitence. Do I take the side of the Divine Heart in this long warfare? Have I courage and constancy?

III. The disciple ought to resemble His Master, the member must be united to the Head; the Christian life, like the life of Christ, is a struggle, a conflict, an agony. I must then struggle, or agonise, to save my soul, and yet more to arrive at the perfection suited to my state. But I dread conflict, trouble, effort; I shrink from interior struggles, from hidden sacrifices and sufferings, from the martyrdom of the heart. I like to be pious in a superficial and easy way, which does no violence to myself; I like to yield to curiosity, slander, and jealousy as far as I can without seriously offending God, or being deprived of the blessing of Communion. I wish to preserve a reputation for piety, to keep up the appearance of devotion at the least possible cost in the way of mortification. I wish to save my soul, and even to become perfect, but only on condition of being spared all struggle with self, all pain and difficulty. How unworthy a disciple am I of Jesus crucified!

I ought to struggle or agonise for others, for the salvation of souls under my care, for the conversion of sinners and idolaters, and especially for the eternal welfare of the dying. They are in agony, they are fighting against death and hell, against despair, against their

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bad habits, and shall I not go to help them? shall I not assist them in their conflicts? shall I not by ardent prayers, by every means that charity can suggest, promote their victory? O Lord, remove indifference and indolence from me! Thou didst fight for these poor souls in Gethsemani; I also will fight and agonise for them. O Agonising Heart of Jesus, give me Thy courage, Thine ardour and devotion, to help my dying brethren. Let me be the soldier and champion of Thy mercy at the death-bed! What have I done hitherto? What resolutions shall I make for the future?

Practice.

Say the prayer, "O most merciful Jesus." Pray especially for holy souls attacked at their last hour by demons. Invoke the good thief, who in his agony on the cross overcame human respect, his companion's opposition, and all the strength of the world and the devil, that he might cleave to Jesus as his Saviour and his God. Intercede for souls who have not learned to do violence to themselves, and for the afflicted who have not the courage to struggle against difficulties.

Example.

St. Frances de Chantal teaches Christian widows how to resist nature and the world,

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and to turn their leisure and their worldly goods to account in an Apostolic manner.

"Those who were afflicted with wounds and sores came to her from great distances; she received them cordially, and attended to them carefully; and as she once said, the day which gave her the fewest opportunities of serving the poor was the one that seemed to her the longest and most wearisome. She cleansed and dressed their wounds with her own hands, sometimes even performing this office on her knees. Some of her servants assure us that they have seen her kiss fearful wounds, at which they could not bear even to look. Every day she went to wait on the sick in the village nearest her abode. The world cannot bear too bright a light, so it began to blame her, saying that she would do far better to remain with her father-in-law; but she humbly answered that she did not deprive him of the duty she owed him, and also that he had servants to wait upon him, whereas, she said, this poor man of Jesus Christ has no one if I forsake him. After that, meekly despising the contempt and censures of the world, she went generously on her way. On Sundays and Feast-days she used to take leave of her father-in-law soon after dinner, and on foot, accompanied by two of her maids, visit the sick in her parish. This good work was attended with mortification, weariness, and inconvenience from the heat of summer and the cold of

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winter, but the faithful servant of Christ persevered in that which she had undertaken. She used to say to her maids as they were setting off, 'We will go and make a little pilgrimage, we will visit our Lord on Mount Calvary, or in the Garden of Olives, or in the sepulchre,' varying the stations and making them the subject of her conversation. When she arrived at the house of her poor friends, she consoled their hearts by good words, while she relieved their bodies by the comforts she brought with her. She had given orders that she should be informed when any one in the neighbourhood was taken ill; she knew of all those who were confined to bed, and found out the nature of each one, in order to provide the most suitable remedies. The courageous piety of holy Tobias animated this generous lady, for with her own hands she washed and laid out the dead who died in her parish. She remained with the dying as much as she could, and if any one died in her absence, she was at once summoned: the survivors would not bury the dead without her. They used to say it was the holy baroness' right, and she had claimed this privilege in return for her care of the sick."*

"A worthy countryman coming back from market at Autun, found a poor boy covered

* *Memoires de la Mère de Chaugy, sur la vie et les vertus de Sainte Jeanne Françoise de Chantal*, pt. i., ch. xviii.

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with leprosy, lying forsaken under a bush; he dismounted, put him on his horse, and brought him as a present to the baroness, who received him with the greatest joy, and laid him in a bed always kept ready for the poor. She generally visited him three or four times a day, anointed his head, and cleaned his sores. When detained by her duties to her father-in-law, she would send one of the servants with the boy's meals, but the servant, less mortified than her mistress, would lay down what she had brought him, and hasten away, stopping her nose. We have heard from this girl's own lips that the poor leper used to weep and say, 'When the lady comes she never stops her nose, she sits down beside me, and teaches me how to save my soul; but when she cannot come, everybody else forsakes me.' After several months of constant care on her part, God called the sufferer to himself, that he might be ready to welcome his benefactress to her eternal home. She watched beside him night after night, and made him receive the last sacraments. A short time before his death, he turned to her, and with clasped hands begged for her blessing; she gave it to him, and embraced him, saying, 'Go, my child, put your trust in God; you will be carried by Angels to a place of rest, you will be better off even than Lazarus.' Not content with all she had done for him during life, as soon as he was dead she began to wash his

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body and lay it out; and regardless of the angry opposition and contempt of a cousin of M. de Chantal's, she performed these last offices, and then assisted at the funeral, and had prayers said for his soul.

"Another object of her charity was a poor woman forsaken by her husband, and afflicted with so fearful a cancer in the face that no one could bear to come near her. The relations of M. de Chantal made many fruitless efforts to dissuade her from this irksome work of charity, but she continued it till the death of the sufferer. An old man covered with itch was immediately brought to fill her place; during the ten months that he lived, the holy lady took the greatest care of him, and on his death laid out his body with her own hands."*

SEPTEMBER.

THE CRISIS.

Spiritual Reading.

BESIDES the external conflict which Jesus waged in His Agony, as the Champion of mercy and life against justice and death, He experienced an interior struggle, a last conflict between

* *Memoires de la Mère de Chaugy, sur la vie et les vertus de Sainte Jeanne Françoise de Chantal,* ch. xix.

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nature and grace. This crisis came upon Him by his own free will. The word *crisis* is used to describe the effort made by nature in different maladies—an effort generally marked by a sweat or some other symptom, and followed by a sudden change for better or worse; in its figurative sense it signifies a perilous or decisive moment in any affair. The two immediate effects of the great crisis of our Saviour's Agony in the Garden of Olives, were his prolonged prayer and his Sweat of Blood, and they were followed by a surpassing eagerness to suffer for our salvation. The last agony of the dying causes a cold sweat, and an oppression of the heart, which is like a prayer. How often during life must we pass through a crisis.

Meditation.

I. Consider Jesus in this crisis, from which He will soon come forth, in the fulness of strength and ardour, to complete the great work of our redemption; bring before your mind the internal conflict between fear and love, life and death, shame and glory. The first assault is made by fear and repelled by love. Where was there ever such cause for fear as his approaching Passion furnished? But where was there ever love like that which filled the Agonising Heart of the God-Man? Does not a conflict of this kind often take place in my heart? I tremble

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before difficulties, sickness, death, poverty, suffering, before all the hardships that beset the path of duty or of perfection. Fear seems sometimes to seize on my whole being; this is the decisive moment, the crisis which may issue in conversion, or sudden and rapid progress in holiness. God provides for each one of us certain crises, which bring agony to our souls. Alas! how often have I yielded to fear. How often has my love grown weak. Why have I not always loved my God above all things? Why has not my love always been pure, disinterested, and intense? How much more holy I might be now! How much more devoted to the souls of my brethren, to the eternal welfare of my neighbours, to the salvation of the dying! O Agonising Heart of my Saviour, make me fear more that I may love more, make me love more, that Thy grace may be victorious in every crisis which nature dreads.

II. Consider the internal conflict which took place in the Heart of our Agonising Lord between life and death; on the one hand was the love of life which the God-Man had in common with all creatures, on the other was the determination to die, peculiar to Himself. How far this love of life has sometimes led me from God, and from duty! How often has it assailed my weak virtue; how often has my conscience reluctantly yielded! I have loved life, and therefore, under the influence of foolish

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imaginations or childish fears, I have preferred spiritual death to the risk of bodily death. I have desired a happy life, and in pursuit of this phantom I have lost the life of grace and forfeited my claim to a life of glory. Far from being ready to die in torments, like Jesus, for the salvation of others, I refuse to die to myself, to my petty passions, to my passing interests, to vanity, caprice, and susceptibility. In my interior conflicts, the crisis almost always ends in favour of sin and of hell, because, alas! I am afraid of dying to self, of dying daily and gradually, of being nailed to the Cross with Jesus Christ, of practising mortification and bearing the marks of His death. O Agonising Heart of my God, give me the desire, the resolution, the strength to die to the world, to nature, sense, and pride, and make me perfectly resigned to temporal death whenever my hour shall come!

III. Consider the conflict which took place in the Saviour's Soul between shame and glory, between the horror which He felt at all the indignities of His Passion, and His sinless desire to preserve His own honour. I often experience a similar conflict. I wish for glory, and God seems to plunge me in the depths of humiliation; a crisis comes, which is to decide my vocation, my state for this life, and, it may be, for eternity. What shall I do or say? I ought to show the energy Saints have shown,

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and to pray as Saints have prayed. Yes, my Lord, let me be mocked, despised, blamed, reproached, covered with shame and ignominy, that I may wear the badge of Thy Son, may follow Him more closely, and may be more completely like Him. Yet more, Lord, more humiliation and abasement, that the image of Thy Son may be more deeply graven in me. My glory, the only glory I desire, is to be closely united to my Divine Head. If He stooped to suffer blows, injuries, and outrages; if He let His eternal splendour be eclipsed by the darkness of death on a Cross of shame, between two thieves, He did it because He had given Himself to us, because He wished to save the souls which daily appear before His tribunal. I will devote myself for the salvation of souls, especially for those who are soon to be judged. If I attain the glory of consoling the afflicted and of winning souls for God, if I ever come to the blessedness of a glorious resurrection, it must be by a dark and narrow and rugged path, like the one my Saviour trod. My God, accept all the humiliations of my life and death; I receive them willingly and offer them to Thee, for the consolation of the afflicted and the salvation of those who die each day.

Practice.

Pray to the Agonising Heart of our good Master for all the afflicted who have to pass

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through a crisis, leading to life or death, to holiness or perdition, to Paradise or hell. Pray for all the dying, especially for those who are hurried into eternity by sudden death. One moment will decide their fate. Have they made an act of perfect contrition or not? Invoke St. Andrew Avellino that they may have the grace of penitence.

Example.

A crisis, in which the Blessed Virgin came to her rescue, changed Victoria Fornari, Foundress of the Annonciades Celestes, from a disconsolate widow to a courageous Saint. Her biographer says: "She was left a widow at the age of twenty-five, and was quite overwhelmed with grief; her eyes became a fount of tears. The image of her beloved Strata was constantly before her mind. She seemed to dread the shadow of consolation, and would not even see her nearest relations. The only thing that had the least power to alleviate her sorrow was the hope of dying in her approaching confinement, but her desire was not granted, and she gave herself up entirely to grief. One day, when she was at the worst, a sudden impulse urged her to apply to the Mother of Mercy, the Comforter of the Afflicted. She knelt down in her room before a picture of our Lady with the Infant Saviour, St. Joseph, and St. John Baptist, and in broken words, with many tears she laid before

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her her sad state and that of her six little children. Confidence seemed to spring up in her heart, and she exclaimed—'Holy Virgin, compassionate Virgin, take the little children I give you, adopt them for your children, for they have no father, and I am not able to do a mother's part for them.' This touching prayer was immediately answered, for while Victoria was yet speaking the Mother of peace and consolation appeared to her, and drew near to dry her tears and embrace her, saying these words, which Victoria wrote down afterwards by order of her Confessor—'Victoria, my child, be of good courage, fear nothing, for I will take mother and children under my protection. Let me act for you; I will take a special care of your house. Live content, and have no more anxiety. The only thing I ask of you is to leave everything to my goodness, and to think of nothing but loving God above all.' Then the vision disappeared, but the consolation was abiding. Like the first King of Israel after his anointing, Victoria felt changed into another person. In thanksgiving for this mercy she made a vow of perpetual chastity, and two other vows; first, never to wear gold, silver, or silk, and secondly, never to go to evening assemblies. The simple mode of life she thus adopted enabled her to spend a great portion of her income in the service of the poor."*

* Collet, *La Vie de la V. M. Victoire Fornari*, l. i., nn. v., vi.

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"She was specially drawn to those sick people whose maladies were most repulsive in their nature. These are details from which the world shrinks, but why should we, with false refinement, hide what religion avows? Let us then say plainly that Victoria did not content herself with providing good physicians for the sick, but she made their beds, prepared their food, cleaned their furniture, brought home their clothes and linen, and washed and mended them with her own hands. A pious young person in her house asked God as a favour that she might have her purgatory in this world, and in answer to her prayer she was afflicted with a loathsome ulcer on the mouth. These two holy souls turned this affliction to the best account. The one bore her sufferings with the most perfect submission, and the other served her day and night with affection and tenderness, such as only charity can inspire. The salvation of souls was ever the principal object of Victoria's care. When she saw a sick person in danger, she used to exhort him to make a good use of his sufferings, by bearing them with patience and complete submission to the will of God, and then to send for a Priest and prepare him for the sacraments. She stayed with the dying to the last, and had Masses said for them. There is reason to believe that many of those whom she assisted owed their eternal salvation to her care. On one occasion a poor woman was drawing near to death without being

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the least prepared. The expression of her countenance was one of fury, and it was in vain to talk to her of resignation to the will of God. She said in a kind of despair that, since He took from her this present life when she most wanted it, she would not ask Him for eternal life. Victoria heard these words with fear, but she thought it was her part to do all in her power for one who so cruelly neglected her own best interests. She found that the wretched woman's misery was caused by the prospect of leaving three young daughters alone in the world without a protector. The holy widow made use of this knowledge. She went to the sick woman, exhorted her to consider her state, to put her trust in God, and to acknowledge her sin. 'And as for your daughters,' said she, 'do not be uneasy about them. Remember that I will be their mother, and if I am unable myself to take care of them I will find others to do it.' These words stayed the downward course of the poor sufferer, she detested her fault, and received the sacraments with great piety."*

* Collet, *La Vie de la V. M. Victoire Fornari*, l. i., nn. xiv., xv.

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OCTOBER.

THE SWEAT OF BLOOD.

Spiritual Reading.

ST. LUKE says of our Lord in His Agony, "His sweat became as drops of Blood trickling down upon the ground" (St. Luke xxii. 44). This sweat was really Blood; it was natural in substance, but of a miraculous abundance. It was caused by conflict and resistance, by shame and contrition, by love and sacrifice. Our Saviour's object at that moment was to offer a sacrifice, to undergo the punishment inflicted on the first Adam, to call down mercy upon us, to expiate our sins, to prove His entire willingness to shed all His Blood in His Passion, and His ardent desire to suffer for us. Mystically it signified the benedictions poured down on the whole world, and especially on the Garden of the Church, which is watered with the Blood of Christ. This Sweat of Blood was a memorial of all His past sorrows, a representation of His present sufferings, and a prophetic token of those yet to be endured in every part of His mystical Body.

Meditation.

I. Meditate on the causes of the Sweat of Blood poured forth by your Saviour. The only

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Son of God saw Himself in presence of the justice of His Father, laden with all your sins. His confusion was so great that He blushed, not as we blush, but so as to sweat Blood. And we see proud human beings, covered with their own sins, stand before God with head erect, unblushing, and self-confident. Alas! am I not one of these? or have I not been like them? Even when I strike my breast in confession, I do not blush before my Judge, or if I feel any confusion, it is rather because I have to declare my fault to the Priest than because I have offended my God, my Saviour, and my Father. Jesus resists even unto Blood the repugnance of His lower nature to suffering and death. Saints like Francis Xavier have been known to shed blood even in their sleep, from their horror at the thought of a stain of sin. But may not the Apostle's words be addressed to us—"You have not yet resisted unto blood" (Heb. xii. 4)? On the contrary, I rush into sin willingly, with a smile on my lips and joy in my heart. I give myself to Satan. I am willing to be led by his emissaries down to the abyss.

The love of Jesus Christ for us dilated His Heart, and drove the Blood to the extremities of His Body, making every pore a mouth to express its ardour. How little am I like Him! How far am I from loving my brethren, or sinners, or the dying, so as to be ready to give my blood for them! I do not even give my

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time, or care, or a little of my money, or a few prayers: I do not even give my love to all. O charity of Jesus Christ, compel me, that I may also be ready to pour forth a sweat of blood to hasten the return of prodigals, and the salvation of the dying!

II. Meditate on the moral ends of this Sweat of Blood. The Saviour offered to God a perfect sacrifice, a holocaust, in which charity took the place of material fire. The Sacrifice of Gethsemani stands mid-way between that of the guest-chamber and that of Calvary. But I fear nothing so much as self-sacrifice, as making my goods, my body, and my soul an offering to God by burning love. Jesus finds sacrifice everywhere, but I would have it nowhere. Nevertheless, the mercies of the Lord would be drawn down upon me by sacrifice, and the curse pronounced against the old Adam changed into a blessing.

Jesus poured forth a Sweat of Blood to let us know that all through His Passion He shed His Blood willingly and lovingly, from His goodwill to us. But do I even make a virtue of necessity? Am I resigned to the crosses which God sends me by the hand of man or by the course of events? When will my love go so far as to seek for sacrifices, mortifications, or austerities, or to impose them upon myself?

By His Sweat of Blood, the Son of God wished to expiate our hidden faults, the sins of our hearts. But I have little or no sorrow

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for my sins of thought, for my evil desires, my impatience, and resentment. In regard to those whom I love, or who are under my care, I blame the faults which may endanger their earthly future, but I am lenient towards those which are hidden in the heart. I judge according to the opinion of men, and my penitence consists for the most part in that outward change of life which is visible to them. Ought I not to pour forth a sweat of remorse and tears of repentance for my secret indulgence in forbidden pleasures? O Agonising Heart of Jesus, make my poor heart more like Thine!

III. Meditate on the mystical signification of the Sweat of Blood. Our Divine Master brings before us all His past, present, and future sorrows; He gathers them together in one moment that He may suffer the more. But I had rather divide my griefs and separate my sorrows, that if I cannot soften them, I may at least be less overwhelmed by them. All sorrows were concentrated on Job, the figure of our Agonising Saviour; but I am always ready to say, "It is too much!" I want to have only one trouble at a time, and if God sends me several I try every means to escape, or I yield completely to grief, I complain and murmur, and I do not even turn my inevitable trials to account by resignation.

Our Saviour showed us by His Sweat of Blood how fertile the Garden of the Church would

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become, how many children of the Church would be Martyrs. Alas! my sweat and my tears are of no use. I do not offer my sufferings to God for the conversion of sinners or the salvation of the dying. My agony might bring forth fruits of salvation for myself and for others, it might draw down blessings from Heaven to earth, if it were transfigured by resemblance to, and union with, my Saviour's Agony. But when affliction comes upon me, I do not unite myself to Him, I do not seek to unite souls to Him, I take no care to lead others to suffer as He suffered. In a moment of fervour I may have desired a Martyr's death, but the hidden martyrdom of daily crosses and trials finds me cowardly and impatient. I am not ready, like Jesus, to shed the last drop of my blood for the salvation of souls! How little do I really consent to share the sufferings of those whom I love, or to see them suffer, as Jesus consented to the martyrdom of His mystic members, and shewed them that He took part in their torments beforehand! O Heart of my God, come into my heart to enlarge it, to strengthen it, to fill it with compassion and generosity for all the afflicted and all the dying!

Practice.

Pray to the Agonising Heart of Jesus for those who draw back when called by God to make some great sacrifice. Pray for those who

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are in an agony of affliction. Pray for the whole Church, and especially for Missionaries exposed to martyrdom. Pray to Jesus and Mary for the innocent and guilty who die by a violent death. On their behalf invoke St. John the Evangelist and the holy women who had courage to follow their Saviour to the last, and to stand at the foot of His Cross.

Example.

We should learn from our Agonising Saviour's Sweat of Blood to serve the sick and dying, regardless of our own fatigue. Blessed Mary of the Incarnation had a great devotion to the Agony of Jesus, and even while she lived in the world with her husband and six children she was unwearied in this work of charity.

"The special attraction of Madame Acarie was for the care of the sick; she looked on their sufferings as her own, and, spite of her weakness and infirmities, she often spent whole days and nights by their side. She was once so ill from these exertions that she had to keep her bed three months, and received the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. Her charity inspired such confidence, that both in Paris and in the country she was constantly summoned by night and by day to attend the sick. Those who lived with her sometimes complained of the constant claims made upon her, and M. Acarie feared that she would overfatigue herself. She

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prepared medicines for the sick, dressed their wounds, held the candle while they were bled, assisted in operations, and visited the hospitals. The Hôtel Dieu at Paris, where she had in her youth wished to become a Nun, and the Hospital of Saint Gervaise, situated near her house, were constantly the scenes of her charity. She was often to be seen going through the wards visiting the sick, inquiring into their state, and performing all kinds of services for them. Many other ladies of quality were led by her to the practice of these good works, which had too long been neglected. In her own illnesses, what grieved her most was being unable to go to the hospitals, and she used to pray God to restore her health that she might resume the loved occupation. She said, 'If I were not prevented by my duties as a wife, I would spend my whole life in the hospitals, even could I do nothing but stand beside the sick with a blessed candle and constantly invoke Jesus and Mary.' The very name of the Hôtel Dieu was sweet to her. 'Hôtel Dieu!' she exclaimed, 'House of God! house of charity!' using many other fervent expressions, which showed her love for the suffering members of Jesus Christ, and for the holy places where human misery finds a refuge. Misery was a recommendation to her charity. Her ardour was so great that she made persevering efforts to conquer her natural repugnance to infection and bad air, and was completely successful.

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How often did she bear the sick on her shoulders! How often she dressed wounds which others could not bear to look at! She fed the sick with her own hands, and watched by those who were dying of the most distressing maladies.

"Her chief pleasure was to comfort the sick, to bring them back to God, and help them to die a good death. She had a special talent for spiritual works of mercy, and looked on the frequent opportunities afforded her of performing them as a cause for special gratitude to God. Her powers found an ample sphere of exercise among the wounded soldiers in the Hospital of Saint Gervaise. She consoled them, prepared them for confession, assisted them on their death-beds, and spoke to them in the most touching manner. She said that on many occasions God had granted her special consolations in the performance of these works of piety. After going through all the wards of the hospital once to see if the sick wanted anything, she would go a second time with the crucifix in her hand, stopping at every bed and exhorting them to take care of their souls. Her words had wonderful power; every one blessed her and praised her. Those who died, died with perfect resignation; and those who recovered, promised their benefactress that for the future they would serve God more faithfully."*

* Boucher, *Histoire de la B. Marie de l'Incarnation*, publiée per Mgr. d'Orleans, l. ii., ch. ii., iii.

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NOVEMBER.

JUDAS.

Spiritual Reading.

JUDAS and Mary, His betrayer and His Mother, were present to the mind of our Saviour while He was suffering and praying in the Garden of Olives. He saw with perfect clearness all that Judas was doing to betray Him; He saw how Mary was sorrowing for Him. His Heart turned from one to the other — repelled by Judas, attracted by Mary, forgiving the traitor, loving His Mother ever more and more. Judas had injured our Lord at the moment when he instituted the Blessed Sacrament; Judas had just made a sacrilegious Communion. He was devoured by envy and avarice, and all the greatest sins were concentrated in his treachery. The Jews must have had a bad idea of the school of Jesus; no doubt they said—"Like Disciple, like Master." The Divine Master knew all this; the knowledge added bitterness to His Agony, and at the same time He saw all the race of Judas, all the many followers of the traitor upon earth.

Meditation.

I. The life of Judas is the life of a Christian in sin. Is not the Christian, like Judas, a dis-

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ciple of Christ, taught by His words, encouraged by His example, sustained by His graces, fed by Himself—the Bread of Life? But when he lives in habitual sin, does not he, like Judas, grow insensible to all his Divine Master's favours and warnings? Does not he abuse grace? Alas! what is my history? What has been my life? Have I not misused the gifts of God?

Why should I be astonished or scandalised at the sight of a bad Priest, or an unworthy Pontiff? Among the twelve Disciples whom our Lord Himself chose and formed, was there not a Judas? Familiarity with God could not make him better; the efforts of the Church, and my own efforts for the conversion and sanctification of a soul, will sometimes fail. I may gain a fresh likeness to Jesus Christ, if on such an occasion I imitate His charity, His gentleness, His patience, His long-suffering and perseverance.

The Saviour did not reject Judas, though He foresaw His treachery. He does not drive a soul away from Him, or cast it from His Heart, because of its foreseen faults; He admits us to His love for our present good dispositions. But I repulse those who seem likely to come to a bad end; I would not number amongst my friends any one who would ultimately abandon or betray me. Perhaps I even wish that an evil end may soon overtake public sinners, my own enemies, and those of the Church and society.

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I cannot bear to have an imperfect or faulty person about me, even for the sake of the constant exercise of patience which ought to be so welcome to me; yet Jesus bore with Judas! How unworthy a disciple am I! How little do I merit graces for sinners by my patience, gentleness, and forbearance.

II. The treachery of Judas is the sacrilege of a Christian. The kiss of Judas is perpetuated in the Church by the profanation of the sacraments, especially of the Blessed Eucharist. Communion is the embrace of God and man; he who makes an unworthy Communion betrays his Master with a kiss. How often are His interests betrayed in our politics, His truth in our literature, His grace and love by our sins! But sacrilege is the crowning point of treachery, for by sacrilege the Person of Jesus is betrayed to His chief enemy, Satan, just as His Flesh and Blood have been given up to unclean animals by profanation. If I have never been guilty of profanation or of sacrilege, yet does not my conscience accuse me of negligence in my preparation for receiving the Blessed Sacrament?

Jesus is continually betrayed in His mystical Body. The leaders of schism and heresy, the partisans of error, those who, calling themselves Christians, oppose our Lord's doctrine and divinity, His Church and His Vicar, are the posterity of the traitor Judas, whom they still further re-

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semble in hatred to the Blessed Virgin. Have I not sometimes attacked revealed truth? Have I not neglected to defend it? What zeal have I shown for the rights of the Church and of its visible Head? What devotion to our Lady?

Avarice led Judas to his crime. How often have interested motives made me betray or disown some well-known truth! When my principles have been at variance with my interests, how often I have sacrificed them! For what sum did Judas betray his Master? For thirty pieces of silver. Alas! Jesus is often now betrayed for a single piece—for nothing at all. Many of my sins have been of no kind of use, have not even given me the momentary pleasure I expected. I have betrayed Thee by my weakness, my human respect, my thoughts and desires. I have no right to cast a stone at Judas; I must rather smite my breast, and, confessing my sins, beg forgiveness from Thine Agonising Heart, O Divine Master, Who, in the Garden of Olives, did sorrow to see me amongst the children of the second Cain.

III. The death of Judas is the death of an impenitent Christian. The traitor would not repent; he despaired of God's mercy, and committed suicide. How many suicides in the present day! How many bad deaths! How many Catholics will not even at their last hour seek to be reconciled to Jesus, will not ask His mercy, will not take refuge in His Heart! Some

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despair of forgiveness, others are obstinate in their iniquity. Perhaps even among my relations and friends are some of whose salvation I could have but a faint hope. O Jesus! I turn to Thine Agonising Heart. The sight of these bad deaths was the bitterest drop in Thine Agony; by that bitterness I pray Thee to send an irresistible grace to dying sinners, that they may hope in Thy mercy and be sincerely converted.

What kind of death will mine be? It will be the echo of my life, but has not my life often shown that I was under the influence of passions like those of Judas? Judas deceived the world and even his fellow-Disciples; do not I often, beneath a regular exterior and habits of devotion, hide a heart full of envy, jealousy, selfishness, revenge, and impurity? Mortal sin always kills charity, and sometimes it also kills hope and faith. Have I not sometimes lost confidence in God, along with charity? O Agonising Heart of Jesus, preserve me from despair and from unbelief! Even if I lose Thy love I will still hope in Thee and believe in Thee. Yes, I will hope in Thee, spite of all, and I will die in the bosom of the Catholic Church. To ensure this grace I will do all I can for the salvation of the dying; I will re-animate their faith, revive their hope, and rekindle their charity.

Practice.

Pray for all Christians who are so unhappy as

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to have committed sacrilege. Pray specially for the enemies and persecutors of the Church, for apostates who betray the Saviour in His mystical Body. Pray for the successors of the Apostles and for Pastors of souls, that they may be worthy ministers of the Blessed Eucharist. Visit the sick, and prepare them to receive from Jesus the kiss of peace and reconciliation. Invoke on their behalf St. Louis of Gonzaga, that angelic youth who never betrayed his Master by a single mortal sin, and who devoted himself to the service of the dying.

Example.

Judas betrayed his Master for some pieces of silver; Louis of Gonzaga gave up riches, honours, pleasures, and life itself to follow Jesus Christ as a poor and humble Religious, and to devote himself to the service of the dying. The sight of this angel of devotion and purity must have given consolation to our Lord in His Agony.

"The year 1591 was a year of fearful famine in Italy; multitudes thronged to Rome in the hope of finding assistance, and consequently the mortality there was very great. The Fathers of the Society of Jesus gave alms to the utmost of their power, and distributed the money intrusted to them for the relief of the poor. They devoted themselves to the service of the hospitals; Father

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Claude Aquaviva, who was then General, took a special charge of the lepers, and established another temporary hospital. This season of misery called the charity of Louis into the fullest exercise. He often went about Rome collecting alms for the sick, and begged so earnestly to be allowed to serve them in the hospitals that his Superiors at last gave him permission. One of his companions, named Bondi, being advised to take precautions against contagion, answered that with the example of Louis before his eyes he could not spare himself, even if death were to be the certain consequence of his labours. The number of deaths increased; it was fearful to see the dying drag themselves naked to the hospital. Many fell dead on the stairs, adding to the infection. The charity displayed by Louis and his companions was heroic. They hastened with the greatest joy to the service of the sick, undressed them, put them to bed, washed their feet, repaired their beds, brought them food, prepared them for confession, and exhorted them to patience. It was observed that Louis always selected the most repulsive cases. As the malady was contagious, several of the Jesuits were attacked, and Bondi, amongst others, died. When Louis saw him in his last agony, he said to one of his companions—'Oh! how glad I should be to change places with Bondi, and die in his stead, if our Lord would allow me.' About

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the same time he said to Father Bellarmine—'I think my days are now but few.' The Father asked him why he said so. 'Because,' answered he, 'I have an extraordinary desire to work in God's service, and I think God would not have given me such a favour if He were not about to call me from this world.'

"It was not long before God satisfied the longings of His servant. Many of those who served the hospitals having fallen ill, his Superiors forbade Louis to go there, but at last they yielded to his earnest entreaties. They took care, however, to send him to the Hospital of Consolation, where sufferers from contagious maladies were not generally received. Nevertheless, Louis fell ill almost at the same time as his companions. He took to his bed on the 3rd of March, 1591, feeling certain from the beginning that this illness would be his last. His countenance and his whole bearing expressed the greatest joy. The illness was a pestilent fever, and on the seventh day he appeared to be at the point of death. After a crisis he fell into a low fever, which carried him off in three months. Having heard it said that there was reason to apprehend a visitation of the plague, he offered himself to his Superior for the service of the plague-stricken in the event of his recovery; when the Father General came to see him he obtained permission to make a vow to this effect. He died in the night

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betwen the 20th and 21st of June, 1591, aged twenty-three years, three months, and eleven days."*

DECEMBER.

MARY.

Spiritual Reading.

HOLY SCRIPTURE is silent as to the state of Mary during the Agony of Jesus, but particular revelations enable us to form an idea of it. The Saviour sought some little repose for His Agonising Heart by turning His thoughts from Judas to His most Blessed Mother. Mary, by her compassion, felt all the sufferings of her dear Son, His mortal sadness, His heaviness, His Agony, His Sweat of Blood. She joined in His prayer, she offered herself to bear the same sufferings, she also was consoled and strengthened by an Angel. Let us then turn to the compassionate Heart of Mary in all our afflictions, let us invoke it for ourselves and for others.

Meditation.

I. Jesus is like a mother to me; am I like a mother to Him in His agonies? I was regenerated and made the child of God by His Blood,

* Cepari, *Vie de Saint Louis de Gonzague*, pt. ii., ch. xxv., xxvi., xxvii.

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and ever since He has always borne me in the bosom of His charity. What pains he suffered for me in the Garden of Olives and on Calvary! He died when He gave me life; and even now His Death, His Agony, His Sweat of Blood, are renewed on the altar, that I may have life, and may have it more abundantly (St. John x. 10). Our mother may perhaps be absent at our last hour, or may be unable to help us; but Jesus will follow us, will reach us, will accompany us with His love, will give Himself to us as our Viaticum, and will refresh us with the fruits of His Agony and Death. "Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet," says Jesus, "will not I forget thee" (Isa. xlix. 15). Do I place all my confidence in His mercy and tenderness? Do I turn to His love in every necessity?

Again our Lord Himself said, "stretching forth His Hand towards His Disciples, Behold my Mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of My Father that is in Heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother" (St. Matt. xii. 49, 50). Am I then like what Mary was to Jesus? What share do I take in His sorrows? Have I compassion for His suffering members? Could the thought of me alleviate His Agony? When he looks down from Heaven upon me, does He see me anxious to console His Agonising Heart by anything

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like maternal solicitude, or even by zeal for the conversion of the dying?

II. Mary would be my Mother, if I were like a child to her. Her will, like the will of God, is that we should be conformed to the image of her only Son, she wishes that Jesus should live and suffer, should die and rise again anew in every Christian; she wishes to see the virtues of her First-born live again in us. Why am I not like what Jesus was to her? Why do I shrink from the sadness, the fear and heaviness, the weariness, the solitude and loneliness, the prayer and watchfulness, the resignation, the agony of exterior and interior sufferings, which are needed to make me like the Son of Mary? O Mother of Jesus, our Lady of compassion, I pray you not only to assist me in my trials, but to make me willingly drink the chalice of bitterness, go forth bravely to meet sorrow, or at least bear my daily cross with courage, that I may be like Jesus!

Then, and not till then, shall I be your child, your joy, and your crown; then shall I have a right to your special protection at the hour of my death. But am I now a worthy child of Mary? Do I observe the precept, "Forget not the groanings of thy mother" (Eccl. vii. 29)?

There is one day in the year on which by solemn worship I seek to make reparation for the neglect shown to Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar, why should I not also have a day to

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repair the neglect of our Lady of Seven Dolours, to implore her compassion for her militant and sorrowing family, the Church, and for sinners, who are her prodigal or wandering children? Have I done anything to lessen the number of sinners who, crucifying again to themselves the Son of God (Heb. vi. 6), renew His Passion and the Passion of Mary? Oh, for the future I will have a real compassion for the Dolours of my Mother, I will alleviate them by my devotion and my purity.

III. Am I a mother to the Faithful in their agony? St. Paul had a mother's tenderness for his converts; he wrote to them, "My little children, of whom I am in labour again, until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. iv. 19). But when is it specially necessary that Christ should be formed in souls? Is it not when they are about to appear before God, and be judged with regard to their likeness to Jesus? And what have I done for these poor souls, who are about to be born into eternity? Do I pray for them? do I speak? do I work, do I suffer for them? Do I at least offer my pains and crosses for the salvation of the dying? Do I visit them, and try like a tender mother to lead them to holy thoughts? or by care for their bodies, do I prepare the way for the conversion of their souls?

Perhaps I complain of being alone, and fear that in my last moments I shall be solitary and

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forsaken. Perhaps I have no relation or friend on whom I can count for assistance, I feel the truth of those words of Holy Scripture, "It is not good for man to be alone" (Gen. ii. 18), "woe to him that is alone" (Eccl. iv. 10). O Lord, if I have no longer a mother according to nature, let me have one by the privilege of holy friendship! A pious and faithful friend is like Jesus and Mary, is a brother, a sister, a mother, a spiritual family replacing our natural family. Let me never, O God, do to another what I would hate to have done to me by another (Tobias iv. 16); let me never forsake a friend in his sorrow, or at his last agony. But give me grace to do to others all things whatsoever I would they should do to me (Matt. vii. 12; Luke vi. 31); let me be a mother to them in their troubles, let me have compassion on the dying, let me call on Jesus and Mary to help them, and do everything in my power for them.

Practice.

Pray daily to the Mother of God and men for the afflicted and the dying. Pray especially, and with all your heart, for your relations and friends who are drawing near to death. Invoke their patron Saints and St. Francis Regis, or any other Saint to whom you have a great devotion. Meditate, and teach others to meditate, on the Dolours of Mary, and enter into

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her pierced heart to learn the grace of perfect resignation.

Example.

Blessed Joseph of Leonissa, a Capuchin Father, proposed Mary as an example of patience and generosity to a poor widow who had just lost her only son by a violent death.

"The talent of consoling the afflicted is one of the gratuitous graces which God gives to whom He wills for the benefit of others, but compassion towards the afflicted is the duty of every Christian, according to the words of St. Paul, 'Weep with them that weep' (Rom. xii. 15). The Blessed Father Joseph had this talent to a remarkable degree. He was ever ready to weep with those who wept, and to lead them to adore the secrets of Divine Providence. On one occasion, when he was preaching the Lent at Jane, he heard that a young man had just been killed in a quarrel, and that his mother, a widow, was inconsolable in her grief. Father Joseph, with true compassion for her affliction, went to visit her, and to share it; but he found her in a state of frenzy, and full of thoughts of revenge. The servant of God did not begin by blaming her anger; on the contrary, he acknowledged that she had good cause for her tears. 'You weep,' said he, 'your tears are reasonable, and God does not blame them. But now that you have given all that nature can expect

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from a mother's heart, it is time to think of what grace claims from a Christian. You must let yourself be ruled by faith; look at Jesus on the Cross' (he showed her the crucifix), 'and consider the tears of the Blessed Virgin His Mother, and her humble submission to the will of God. Will you not follow so beautiful an example? Your son has fallen a victim to the hatred of his enemies, but the Son of Mary suffered from the cruelty of His own people. The one was, like all Adam's children, a sinner, the other was the God-Man, the Saint of Saints, and He died only to restore those who were dead in sin. In short, your son died in a personal quarrel, your Saviour died for the sins of others. Yet Mary did not yield to such an excess of grief, she did not call upon Heaven to destroy those wicked deicides; she imitated the clemency of her Son, Who even on the Cross prayed for His murderers; every day she still intercedes for sinners. You have acted as an afflicted mother, but is it not now time to behave after her example, as a Christian mother, who conforms herself in all things to the will of God?'

"The tears of a too human sorrow were changed into tears of holy compunction, and the poor mother seemed absorbed in the love shown by Jesus on the Cross. The holy man led her to something yet more perfect. As the Blessed Virgin loves those who have crucified

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her Son so much that she seeks their salvation, she also learned charity towards those who had taken the life of her child. She invited them to her house, even before the funeral, and assured them that she forgave them for the love of Jesus and His holy Mother."*

O compassionate Heart of Mary, be my example, my refuge, and my support. Teach me to show compassion to the sorrows of others, and obtain for me the fortitude and resignation I need in my own sufferings.

FRIDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA.

FEAST OF THE PRAYER OF OUR LORD ON MOUNT OLIVET.

THIS Feast, celebrated for the first time in 1829, has become the principal Feast of several Associations founded in honour of the Agonising Heart, or of the holy Agonies.

A meditation on prayer, suited to this day, will be found in the third section of this volume and in the second part of the Holy Hour. 1. Do we pray? 2. Do we pray like Jesus? 3. For whom do we pray?

* Daniel de Paris, *La Vie du B. P. Joseph de Léonissa*, l. iii., ch. vi.

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MASS.

Introit.

PSALM liv.—My heart is troubled within me, and the fear of death is fallen upon me.

Psalm lxviii.—Save me, O God; for the waters are come in even unto my soul.

V. Glory be to the Father, &c.

Collect.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Who in the Garden didst teach us, both by word and example, to pray, in order to overcome the dangers of temptation, mercifully grant that we, always continuing earnest in prayer, may deserve to reap its abundant fruit, Who livest and reignest with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost, world without end. Amen.

Epistle.

Hebrews v. 5—10.—Christ did not glorify Himself that He might be made a High Priest: but He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee. As He saith also in another place: Thou art a Priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech. Who in the days of His flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offering up prayers and supplications to Him that was able to save Him from death, was heard for His reverence. And whereas, indeed, He was the Son of God, He learned

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obedience by the things which He suffered; and being consummated, He became, to all that obey Him, the cause of eternal salvation. Called by God a High Priest, according to the order of Melchisedech.

Gradual.

Psalm lxxxvii.—My soul is filled with evils, and my life hath drawn nigh to hell. *V.* I am counted among them that go down to the pit: I am become as a man without help.

Tract.

Psalm lxviii.—Hear me, O Lord, for Thy mercy is kind. *V.* And turn not away Thy face from Thy servant; for I am in trouble, hear me speedily. *V.* Depart not from me: for tribulation is very near: for there is none to help me.

Gospel.

Luke xxii. 39—44.—At that time, Jesus, going out, went according to His custom to the Mount of Olives. And His Disciples also followed Him. And when He was come to the place, He said to them, Pray, lest ye enter into temptation. And He was withdrawn away from them a stone's cast: and kneeling down, He prayed, saying, Father, if Thou wilt, remove this chalice from Me: but yet not My will, but Thine be done. And there appeared to Him an Angel from Heaven, strengthening Him.

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And being in an Agony, He prayed the longer. And His sweat became as drops of Blood, trickling down upon the ground.

Offertory.

Psalm lxviii.—Save me, O God; for the waters are come in even unto my soul.

Secret.

Grant, we beseech Thee, O Lord, by the merits of this holy Sacrifice, that being taught by divine instruction, we may so efficaciously guide ourselves to prayer, that Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, may find us at our death watching and free from sin.

Preface of the Cross.

Communion.

Matt. xxvi.—Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Post Communion.

Refreshed with heavenly nourishment, we suppliantly beseech Thee, Almighty Father, that by virtue of the Prayer of Thine only-begotten Son, we, who are placed in the midst of so many dangers of body and soul, may deserve safely to arrive at the Kingdom of Heaven, through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

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III. — EXERCISES AND PRAYERS FOR EVERY WEEK.

I.

METHOD OF HEARING MASS IN UNION WITH THE AGONIES OF OUR LORD.

From the Introit to the Offertory: The Agony of Nazareth.

O WORD of God, Thou art brought very low! Thou wast in Heaven, and now Thou art in a stable; Thou didst sit at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, and now Thou art in the manger, between two dumb animals; Thou wast the uncreated Word and Intelligence, and now Thou canst not speak, Thou seemest not yet to have the use of reason; all power and liberty were Thine, and now Thou art wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and weak as any other new-born child; riches and bliss were Thine, and now Thou art in poverty and in tears. How art Thou humbled! How art Thou emptied! And for thirty-three years Thou wilt bring Thyself down to us, by the greatest humiliation. What has worked this marvel? It is love. "God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten

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Son" (St. John iii. 16). He gave Him in the manger, He still gives Him on the altar. What has done this? Love. The only Son of God "loved me, and delivered Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). From His Incarnation to His Death He gave Himself up to humiliations, to labours, and sufferings, as He still gives Himself on the altar. Would that I could comprehend the breadth and length and depth and height of that Divine Heart which has loved me so much —that I could know Its treasures of patience, devotion, and tenderness.

But what an abyss of sorrow is there! The Agony of the Saviour's Heart began at the moment of His Incarnation in Mary's womb, and did not end till He breathed His last upon the Cross. Love and knowledge caused that Agony. Jesus loved His Divine Father; He knew all the outrages that ever had been or ever would be committed against Him. He loved His own most holy Humanity, and He knew each detail of the ignominy and suffering It was to undergo. He loved us all; He loved His Mother and His Disciples, He loved the Jews and the Gentiles, and He knew all the fearful calamities that were to come upon them. He knew all our sins and their consequences; He knew how many of us would be unhappy in this life, how many would be lost in the next. Who can tell what such knowledge must have been to the most pure and loving, the most holy

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and sensitive of all hearts? If "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor. ii. 9), what mind can conceive, what ear can hear, what eye can see, all the moral suffering, the Agony and martyrdom of soul, which the same God prepared for Him Whom He loved most, even for His only Son? The glory of Jesus in Heaven corresponds to the Agonies of Jesus on earth; show me His glory and I will show you His Agonies. "The whole life of Christ was a cross and a martyrdom;"* and this life is perpetuated on the altar. O my dear Master, I see Thee at Thy birth lying on the cold straw, wrapped in swaddling-bands, already suffering interior Agony; but the stable and manger are still with us, the altar is as cold as the straw, and Thou art wrapped in the Eucharistic veils as in Thy swaddling-bands.

Thy hidden life was a life of obedience, of prayer, and of labour, and all the while Thine Heart was in Agony. What life can be more hidden than Thy life in the Tabernacle? Thou art obedient to the Priest; night and day Thou art praying and labouring for our salvation.

During Thy public life Thou didst go through Judea sowing the seed of the Word of God, and watering it with Thy Sweat, ever bearing in Thy Breast an Agonising Heart. I see Thee again

* *The Following of Christ*, bk. ii., ch. xii., 7.

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in Thy Priest, who ascends to the altar, goes to and fro in the sanctuary, explains the Prophets, and preaches the Gospel.

O my Lord and my God, they used to bring Thee the sick and Thou didst heal them; they called upon Thee for the dead and Thou didst raise them to life. I bring to Thee in my heart, and lay before Thine altar, all the sick whom I love, all holy souls who are afflicted or in agony, all sinners who will die to-day, that Thou mayest convert them, that Thou mayest console them, that Thou mayest save them by the virtue which constantly goes forth from Thee. O Heart of my Jesus, remember all Thine Agonies, and have pity on all the sorrowful and on all the dying.

From the Offertory to the Elevation: The Agony of the guest-chamber.

While the Priest offers to God the host which is to be consecrated, while he pours the water and wine into the chalice, let us represent to ourselves the Saviour in the guest-chamber, at the Last Supper, preparing the matter of the Sacrament which He was about to institute. At the present day our Lord is in the Eucharist, in the immortal and impassible life which he now enjoys. But on that night the God-Man was in the Eucharist in the mortal and passible life which He then lived, with all the sorrows of His Soul and all the Agony of His Heart. And

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what special cause augmented His sorrows and Agonies? The distinct and bitter knowledge of all the outrages which He would receive in that very Eucharist which is the master-piece of His love. Everything He ever has suffered or will suffer in the Sacrament of the Altar, was present to Him in that first Sacrament the evening before He died on the Cross. Alas! how sore must have been the grief of His loving Heart! What Christian can fail to compassionate It?

When He took the bread into His holy and venerable Hands, when He blessed It and consecrated It, He knew which guest was to receive each portion; He placed Himself in each portion with a view to that one—He thought of him. And so, amongst all the hosts which the Priest consecrates, one is destined for me; Jesus thinks of me as He places Himself there, He waits for me to come and receive Him. Another host is perhaps destined for my dying friend. Jesus knows him, He is thinking of him, He means to go and console him on his death-bed—to be his Viaticum. But, at the Last Supper, one of the Twelve was Judas, a sacrilegious person, a traitor. O my God, how must Thine Heart have suffered when the Holy Host touched the apostate's lips! What an Agony for Thee to go down into the breast of Judas, to rest upon his heart! Didst Thou not see in him all the sacrilegious Christians who have drawn near to Thine altar, or whose sick beds Thou hast

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visited? How many they are! How cruel they are!

At the consecration of the chalice, Thou saidst that Thy Blood was to be shed for many unto remission of sins, and indeed the next day It was poured forth on Calvary's height, and every day It flows anew on the altar. But Judas did not profit by It, and to how many sinners is It of no avail! Judas despaired of Thy mercy, and died the death of the reprobate; how many sinners who have fallen once or twice into sacrilege become hardened and die in impenitence! They were before Thee, O my Lord! Thou didst love them; Thou wouldst have borne all those outrages a thousand times again to bring back hope and love to their souls. O! if among the Christians who are to die to-day one is in sacrilege, let the voice of Thy Blood cry for mercy for him, let It prevail against the voice of his iniquities, let It call from the tomb this other Lazarus, for whom Thy tears have flowed, for whom Thine Heart has been so long in Agony!

While He celebrated the first Mass, the Son of God saw His death represented in the Sacrifice of the Altar, and still that Sacrifice brings before us each circumstance of His Passion. The Saviour was violently dragged from the Garden, and led with ignominy through the streets of Jerusalem; and has He not often been cast out of His Tabernacle, and trodden

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underfoot by His enemies? He was forsaken by His own, set at nought by the people, condemned by the rulers, and now is not He often forsaken in His sanctuary, despised by Christians, blasphemed by heretics, persecuted by rulers who wish to deprive Him of His temples? The murderers fastened Him to the Cross, His Feet, and Hands, and Heart were pierced, and has not the Blessed Eucharist been often pierced and rent, and destroyed by profane hands? But as He died, He saved one of the thieves who hung in agony at His side. Go forth, O Holy Host, Who openest to us the gates of Heaven, go to the poor sinner who is stretched on his death-bed, as on a cross, and say to him, "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise" (St. Luke xxiii. 43). Do not the throbbings of his heart, his tears and sighs, his sweat and trembling, cry to Thee, *Memento mei* (St. Luke xxiii. 42)—remember me, remember the poor sinner who is soon to die. If he cannot speak, I lend him my voice to make this prayer to Thee. I stand at the foot of the altar where Thou dost renew Thy Sacrifice, as John and Mary stood by the Cross. They prayed for the good thief, and I pray for all sinners who are to die to-day. *Memento.* Be mindful of the living who will soon be numbered among the dead, be mindful of all who are in their agony, open Thine arms to receive them, open Thine Heart to hide them. O Heart of my

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Saviour, Sacred Heart, glorious here, but Agonising in the guest-chamber, be the refuge and defence of all the dying who are to appear to-day before their Judge!

From the Elevation to the Communion: The Agony of the Garden.

After He had instituted the Blessed Eucharist in the guest-chamber, the God-Man went to the Garden of Olives. The Sacrifice which He had just offered, and the Communion which He had just made, gave Him fresh strength to bear fresh sorrows. The moral sufferings of our Saviour during His Agony in the Garden are far beyond our comprehension; but this part of the Mass may help us to form some idea of them.

The Priest is alone on the highest step of the altar, away from the crowd; Jesus was alone, away from His Disciples; it was the last step towards the consummation of His Sacrifice.

The Priest often genuflects while he uncovers the chalice which contains the Blood of the Adorable Victim; Jesus is on His Knees, He falls prostrate at the sight of the chalice of suffering and death before Him.

The Priest prays for our dead, he says to our Lord, *Memento*—"Remember all those who have gone before us with the sign of faith, and who sleep the sleep of peace!" Jesus in His Agony prayed for all the dead, for sinners whose souls

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are dead, for the just whose bodies are dead. He bore them all in His Heart, His Agony was for them all. Our interior sufferings are a means whereby we may convert sinners and help our departed friends. From the chalice of Agony, as well as from the chalice of the Blessed Eucharist, a dew arises which falls on earth to soften and purify it, and descends to Purgatory to refresh the captive souls. The Sweat of our Lord in the Garden did not flow merely for the conversion of sinners, it went down to Purgatory to comfort the departed. O Lord, I would unite my agony to Thine Agony, my sorrows to Thy sorrows, my tears to Thy tears, my sweat to Thy Sweat, that I may comfort, refresh, and deliver all those whose death I mourn. *Memento.* Remember all those whom I have loved while they were alive, and whom I still love now that they are dead. I present them to Thee to be watered by Thy Blood, I pray Thee for a remembrance of them, a remembrance from Thine Agonising Heart, for such a remembrance is a benediction.

And for us sinners, *nobis quoque peccatoribus*, how much Thou didst suffer in the Garden! Thy sadness and fear, Thy weariness and heaviness, Thy Sweat of Blood, Thy shrinking from suffering, were all for us. And after Thy most perfect act of resignation, after Thou hadst taken into Thine hands the bitter chalice of the Passion, Thou saidst to Thy Heavenly Father

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the words which the Priest says when he Elevates the Chalice and the Host, *Tibi omnis honor et gloria*—to Thee, My God, be all honour and glory, by My Agony, by My Sacrifice, by My Elevation on the Cross, and by My Death!

Then, Thou didst pray as the Priest prays, *Pater*—My Father, Whom I love and honour as a Father, even when Thou dost treat Me as an enemy; *fiat*—Thy will be done, done rather than Mine, done on earth as in Heaven, in sorrow as in joy, in agony as in bliss. Give Me the daily bread of Thy grace and Thy love; and, if it may be, deliver Me from this chalice of bitterness, from evil of Soul and Body, from the final impenitence of the dying, from the damnation of sinners whom I came to save. O My Father, My God, pardon all those who are to appear before Thee to-day; deliver them from past evils, that is, from their sins; from present evils, that is, from the pains of death; from evils to come, in Purgatory, or in hell. For their deliverance I am ready to drink to the dregs the chalice which Thine Angel presents to Me.

The Priest is the visible angel of the Lord. At the moment of Communion, he turns towards us with the Body of our Lord, he comes down from the altar as from Heaven, he put the Bread of Angels into our mouths. Let us partake of It, according to the invitation of the great Apostle (1 Cor. xi. 26), by sacramenal,

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or at least by spiritual, Communion, with a generous resolution to show forth the death of the Lord, that is to say, to reproduce it in ourselves, to die with Jesus, to suffer with Jesus, for the salvation of the living, for the refreshment of the departed, for the consolation of the afflicted, for the conversion of the sinners who are to die to-day.

From the Communion to the end: The Agony of Calvary.

A holy Priest has said—"Our Lord offers Himself to God in the heart of a communicant, as He did upon Calvary. The feelings of His Heart are the same, His prayers are the same."* Does not Jesus lose His sacramental life on the Calvary of our heart after Communion, as He lost His natural life on Golgotha? His enemies mocked Him and persecuted Him to the last, but Christians who make a fervent Communion honour Him and sympathise with Him like John and Mary. The hearts of His Blessed Mother and of His beloved Disciple were in harmony with His Divine Heart; they were a consolation to Him for the crimes committed against Him, and for the blasphemies which assailed His ears. If we would show forth the death of the Lord in our Communions, ought

* M. Olier, *Catéchisme Chrétien pour la vie intérieure*, pt. ii., leçon iv.

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we not also to unite our hearts with His dying Heart? The more we love Him the more does He enable us to share the Agony of Calvary.

I love Thee, O my Divine Master, I behold Thee, I listen to Thee, in my heart as on the Cross. If I have enemies, if my blood boils at the thought of the harm they have done to me, I hear Thee say—"Forgive them, for they know not what they do." O Innocent Victim, did not the sight of Thy cruel murderers fill Thee with indignation on the Cross? Yet Thou saidst to Thy Father—"Forgive them, for they know not what they do." Thou art my captive, a prisoner of love in my heart; by Thy love for us forgive all who are to die to-day.

On the Cross Thou saidst—"I thirst; I thirst for the salvation of men. Bring Me souls, bring Me hearts to refresh Me." And now Thou sayest in my heart—"I thirst for all the souls who are this day to appear before My tribunal. If they would bring Me but a little love in the vessel of their heart, My mercy would receive it and would deliver them from My justice." O sweetest Saviour, by my prayers and sufferings and labours I will pour Thy love into the hearts of the dying, that Thy thirst may be assuaged. How burning is that thirst! It was Thy most cruel Agony on the Cross. I know something of it in those happy moments when my heart is near Thine Heart, and I am consumed with a desire that some soul I love may

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be brought back to Thee. The father of the prodigal was filled with sorrow for him; and had his mother been alive she would have sorrowed yet more bitterly. But, my Divine Crucified Lord, art not Thou the Father of all prodigals? Is not Thy love for them beyond the love of the tenderest mother for her only child? Thine Agony on Calvary was an Agony of love, an Agony of regret, and an Agony of longing. In vain were Thy Feet nailed to the Cross to wait for sinners, and Thine Arms open to embrace them; in vain didst Thou cry to them—"I thirst," and let Thy Heart be pierced to make their pardon sure. The prodigals did not come back; they brought no draught to slake the thirst of their Father dying of grief upon the Cross. O Agonising Heart of Jesus, how greatly must Thou have suffered, since even I, who have little of Thy tenderness, suffer so much when I fail in gaining certain souls for Thee.

On their behalf Thou saidst—"Father, into Thy hands I commend the soul of this sinner, the soul of this dying man; it is Mine, for I have bought it with My Blood. But, spite of all I have done, it is obstinate in evil—I have no hope save in Thee." O my loving Saviour, how great is my sorrow when I have to say—"All means have failed; my labours, my prayers, and my tears are in vain! Lord, I commend this soul into Thine hands—that is all I can do for it. Will it be punished by Thy

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justice, or saved by Thy mercy? O Mary, behold your son! He is in a desperate state. Ungrateful as he is, yet show yourself his Mother, the Mother of Mercy. Persuade the Saviour to visit him on his death-bed, in the sacrament of reconciliation and in the Holy Viaticum, and to say to him as He said to the penitent thief—'This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.'"

Seeing these deserted souls, seeing how little men were doing to save them, and that even His Father's love seemed to be wearied by their resistance to grace, and to forsake them, Jesus cried—"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Alas! I have sometimes felt myself forsaken; and worse still, I have felt that those I loved best were forsaken. It has been a fearful agony to my heart. When I think of the lost in hell who are forsaken by God, and of the sinners and the dying who have wearied out His mercy and rejected His grace, my sorrow is inexpressible. Yet my poor heart is far less loving than Thy Divine Heart, my Agonising Saviour.

Therefore didst Thou say—"It is consummated." Thy death for sinners who will not be saved is a consummation of love and of agony. O give me a large share in Thy sorrows, if only I may have a large share in Thy love. Those who suffer most are not the most unhappy, but those who love least. Oh! then,

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whenever I assist at the Holy Sacrifice, let my sufferings be consummated, let my agony be consummated, if only my love and devotion may also be consummated. Every day I will come to the foot of the altar, as to the foot of the Cross, to lay in a store of patience and charity; that I may support the weak, may comfort the afflicted, instruct the ignorant, convert sinners, and help the dying to unite themselves to Thy death, that they may be saved.

II.

METHOD OF PERFORMING THE DEVOTION OF THE HOLY HOUR FOR THE AFFLICTED AND DYING.

THE spiritual exercise of the Holy Hour is performed on Thursday, from eleven o'clock to midnight, as an act of homage to our Lord in His Agony in the Garden. It may, indeed, be made at any time on Thursday evening, provided it be later than midway between noon and sunset, and it may be made in any place and in any position. The sick need only unite themselves in spirit to their Agonising Lord.* The method we give may be useful to those who, from weakness or any other cause, are unable to make long meditations. They

* *L'Agonie de Jésus*, liv. iv., ch. iv., t. i., pp. 416, 417.

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should read it slowly through, or they may confine themselves to some of the subjects in the second section. Those who can meditate should remember that mental prayer comes nearest to the Prayer of our Divine Master on Mount Olivet, and has therefore a special value. The considerations which we suggest may serve as a groundwork for their pious sentiments, acts of loving affection, and holy desire. Food for the heart rather than for the intelligence is here to be sought, and it is well to dwell on each point as long as it supplies the nourishment we need. The next point may be taken up on a subsequent occasion, and thus the exercise may be profitably varied.

Preparation.

"Before prayer prepare thy soul." These are the words of Holy Scripture, yet how many forget them, and think that by their own efforts they can gain that grace of prayer which is a key to so many other graces. Do not tempt God, and whenever you would converse with Him ask earnestly for the gift of prayer.

God sees you, the Angels see you, the Saints in Heaven see you, as you go to keep Jesus company in the hour which He sanctified by His Agony. Mary would fain place her compassionate Heart within your heart, that you might feel the sorrows of her Son as she felt

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them. Sinners are sleeping around you, as the Apostles slept in the Garden, and some, like Judas, are awake, to betray and offend their Lord. All those who are to die to-day or to-morrow, the afflicted, and the souls in Purgatory, turn to you, hoping that your tears and prayers will gain some help for them.

A fervent soul thus describes his preparation for the Holy Hour:—"I go with a holy trembling into the Garden of Gethsemani. As I enter it I see on my left hand a long line of mortals in their last agony; I hear the death-rattle. On my right hand is the flickering of the flames of Purgatory, and the groaning of the dear souls who beg for our assistance. Before me is Jesus Agonising in His Church, and in the person of His Vicar, the holy and glorious Pontiff, Pius IX. The Church is in agony, and soon, perhaps, her enemies will have a three days' triumph. . . . These considerations are my preparation. In a little chapel I light a lamp of *olive oil* before the picture of the Sacred Heart. I put this hour under the protection of St. Peter, offering it in reparation for his sleep in the Garden of Olives."

Pray to God, pray to Mary, to the Angels and Saints, that you may be able to apply all your powers to the contemplation of Jesus in His Agony. Call briefly to mind the mystery of the Garden, from the time when our Divine

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Lord left Jerusalem with His Disciples until the traitor delivered Him to His enemies by a kiss. Picture to yourself a mountain near the Holy City, a solitary place, with olive trees. The Apostles are lying on a low, flat rock; Jesus has fallen on His Face in the Grotto; His Soul is full of grief, and He sweats a Sweat of Blood. It is night; seek your Agonising Saviour in the darkness. Kneel down beside Him, and if you cannot take His sorrows and bear them yourself, at least meditate upon them and taste their bitterness.

At the beginning of this exercise ask again for the grace of compassion with the Agonies which your Divine Head once suffered in His own Person, as well as with those which He now suffers in His afflicted or dying members.

I.—Jesus makes a choice amongst His Disciples.

Jesus left Jerusalem, and went, according to His custom, over the brook Cedron to the Mount of Olives. His Disciples followed Him, and they went to a farm called Gethsemani, where there was a garden, into which He entered with His Disciples, and He said to them—"Sit you here, till I go yonder and pray." And taking with Him Peter, and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, He began to grow sorrowful and to be sad, to fear and to be heavy. Then He saith to them—

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"My Soul is sorrowful even unto death. Stay you here and watch with Me" (St. Matt. xxvi. 36, 37; St. Mark xiv. 32, 33; St. Luke xxii. 39; St. John xviii. 1).

I. The preferences of Jesus. All the Apostles were gathered together around their Divine Master, in the guest-chamber, for the Last Supper. He had preferred them to the Gentiles, to the rich and powerful among the Jews, to the rest of His Disciples. What an honour to be present when the Eucharist was instituted, to be ordained Priest by Jesus, to receive Holy Communion from His Hand! A call to the true faith, a vocation to the Priesthood, to the Religious life, or to the observance of the counsels of perfection, is a mark of the preference of Jesus. And is it not a mark of His preference to have a special devotion to His Agonising Heart, and to belong to a Confraternity which seeks to console the afflicted and to save the dying? He has chosen us from among a crowd to form part of His guard of honour. But all the Apostles received Holy Communion and the Priesthood; are we all faithful to our vocation? How many men will not follow the call of God! When God calls them to anything contrary to nature, what delays, and hesitations, and resistances we see! Amongst the Twelve was a Judas, who turned the favours of our Lord into an occasion of sacrilege; how many amongst us

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misuse grace, and fail in regard to the duties of our calling!

The Apostle who made an unworthy Communion in the guest-chamber was the one to betray His Master in the Garden of Olives; while He who leaned on the Breast of Jesus at the Last Supper, alone was His faithful companion on Calvary. What use have I made of the preferences of my Saviour? Alas! my God, when Thou hast allowed my heart to rest on Thine in Communion, I have not thence gained strength to follow Thee to Gethsemani and to climb the height of Calvary; I would fain turn back to Mount Thabor, rather than take my way to the Garden of the Agony. Give me the will to follow Thee, the courage to watch with Thee; let me share Thy sufferings, and unite my agony to Thine, for the consolation of all the afflicted, and the conversion of all sinners.

II. The privilege of suffering. In the Garden of Olives our Lord chose three of His Disciples to be the confidants of His sorrows. What do we think of such a privilege? There are times when the sadness and heaviness of Jesus, His fears and conflicts, are no longer merely matter of history to us, but seem actually to pass from the Heart of the Master into the heart of the disciple. Is it not as if He presented to us His own bitter chalice, and urged us to drink it? But then, instead of gratefully receiving so honourable a privilege, we envy the easier

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happiness of souls whom Jesus has left in the crowd; we look on ourselves as injured rather than favoured by the Saviour. The Cherubim stood with a flaming sword at the gate of the Paradise of pleasure, lest man should return and eat the fruit of life (Gen. iii. 24). So the bad angel stands at the door of the Garden of the Agony, to scare away chosen souls, to deceive them, to hinder them from entering in and finding the fruit of life, from eating with resignation the bread of grief, and drinking with love the chalice of affliction. Even well-meaning persons are often deterred from some pious project, some religious foundation or holy undertaking, by fears which Satan brings before them; by crosses and thorns, by humiliations and labours, which he makes them believe to be in the way; and so they shrink from the apprehended peril—they are afraid to cross the Cedron. Alas! how often have I fled from sorrow, from weariness and conflict? Even now do not imaginary fears often keep me back from a real good?

Satan desired to sift the Apostles as wheat. They will all flee from suffering and humiliation; only one will go to Calvary and stand at the foot of Christ's Cross. Even John at first will flee, but he will prove his sincere penitence and his ardent love by quickly returning to his Crucified Master, and showing himself as His friend before His very murderers. And he will be

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rewarded by an inestimably precious mark of preference: the Mother of Jesus will be given to him as his Mother. The privileges which we enjoy in common with others lose half their value in our eyes. Here is the rarest privilege of all: the Virgin Disciple stands by the Cross with the Virgin Mother—the most perfect innocence is crowned by the most bitter grief. Is this the privilege we would choose for ourselves—undeserved suffering, desertion by all, loneliness on Calvary, with Mary in her desolation, with Jesus crucified? Oh, no; this is the last thing we wish for, because it costs nature most. What blindness and cowardice it is to give up the privilege of suffering. I fear what would make my soul fruitful, what would enable me to do good. O my heart, learn to be like the Agonising Heart of Jesus; be like an olive from which the oil of mercy is pressed out; like a grape trodden and squeezed that it may give forth the wine that cheers the heart of man, that comforts the afflicted, inebriates the Martyrs, and strengthens the dying for their last conflict.

III. Preparation for suffering. Our Saviour's preparation for death was a preparation for suffering, and His disciples ought to prepare to suffer well, as they prepare to die well. To make them worthy of the privilege of grief and able to profit by it, they need St. John's preparation—the guest-chamber and Gethsemani. Do

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we often return by loving meditation to the guest-chamber where the Son of God instituted the Adorable Sacrament, where the Holy Ghost descended on the Apostles? Do we go to Mount Olivet, where Jesus poured forth His Sweat of Blood, and whence He ascended into Heaven; to Calvary, where He died on the Cross, and where Christians from all nations have since flocked together to make His sepulchre glorious (Isa. xi. 10)? O Hill of Zion, Mount of Olives, Mount of Golgotha, in company with the faithful Disciple I will follow my Divine Master up your heights, that I may rise to perfect innocence and love, devotion and patience. Mary has gone before me, and beckons to me, as a mother to her child. Shall I not follow her? Shall I not desire the grace of holy suffering? Shall I not prepare for it by watching and prayer? Cannot I, like Jesus and Mary, offer my Communions, my sorrows, my death itself, for the salvation of souls, especially for those whose eternal sentence will soon be pronounced? Alas! my generosity is shackled by sin and love of ease. Sin makes me deaf to the voice of Jesus in His Agony, and leads me to despise His favours; love of ease deters me from penance, and makes me undervalue the treasure of sorrow.

But suffering is not lessened by distance from God. Judas suffered more than St. John, and the torments of the lost surpass those of the

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Martyrs. O my Master, what shame and grief have I laid up for myself when, in the hope of avoiding some trouble or disgrace, I have forsaken Thee! Heart of Jesus, draw me to Thyself, hide me in Thyself, plunge me in the ocean of Thine Agonies, that I may learn the apostolate of suffering, that I may turn my sadness and anguish to a holy account. Heart of Mary, thou alone didst share the Saviour's Agony in the Garden of Olives, thou didst lead St. John to Calvary's height; by my devotion to thee, by thine intercession for me, I may hope to be united to Jesus in His Agony, to imitate His patience, to share His sorrows, to correspond to the favour He has shown me in choosing me to honour His Agonies, by saving the dying and consoling the afflicted.

II.—Jesus in His Agony falls on His Face and prays.

Going a little further, Jesus withdrew from His Disciples about a stone's cast, and having knelt down, He fell upon His Face on the ground, praying and saying, "My Father, if it be possible, all things are possible to Thee, if Thou wilt, remove this chalice from Me, but yet not My will but Thine be done, not as I will but as Thou wilt, not what I will, but what Thou wilt." And there appeared to Him an Angel from Heaven strengthening Him. And

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being in an Agony, He prayed the longer. And His sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground (St. Matt. xxvi. 39; St. Mark xiv. 35, 36; St. Luke xxii. 41—44).

I. Do we pray? Prayer is the manifestation of our desires, and during His Agony our Divine Master manifested to His Father all the desires of His Heart. Have we no desires which we should be afraid to manifest to God, because we know that they would be displeasing to Him? Do we come to Him as children to their Father, as servants to their Master, as the sick to the Physician, and lay our lawful desires before Him, with simplicity, love, respect, and confidence? In some of our prayers for perfection, for devotion, for self-abnegation, have we not a secret fear of being heard? Prayer is the elevation of the soul towards God: Jesus, while He lay prostrate, beheld His Father and His eternal decrees. Does our soul often rise to God, to heavenly and eternal things? Or does it rather cleave to earth and earthly things? The Son of God prayed that the chalice of His bitter Passion might be removed from Him; do we pray that threatened evils may be averted, and that temporal blessings may be bestowed upon us and upon those dear to us? Our good Master in the Lord's Prayer invites us to make such prayers, and the Church constantly offers them. But perhaps we abjectly beg for favours

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from creatures, instead of stretching out our hands to God.

Jesus in His Agony uses words for the solace of His Heart, which was inflamed with love and oppressed with grief. Are we not apt to undervalue vocal prayer, even when it is not a mere form said by heart? We undervalue it when we might most profitably begin by it, and therefore we become cold and careless in meditation, contemplation, and mental prayer. Vocal prayer quickens attention and arouses feeling, and those who neglect it are in danger of not praying at all. O my God, after the examples of the great masters of the contemplative life, I will worship Thee with my body and my soul, I will call upon Thee to give Thy grace to my afflicted brethren, who are passing through the agonies of this life, and to my sick brethren who are entering the agony of death. Let the afflicted be supported by the consolations of faith, give the dying that sincere penitence which will prepare them for their passage into eternity, sanctify them all by entire conformity to Thy good pleasure. May the dying receive Thy Minister with gratitude, as the consoling angel who will strengthen them against all that nature fears; may they drink the bitter chalice of death with resignation, and gain the Bread of Heaven by the sweat of their brow, by that cold sweat of death which is a sacrifice and an expiation.

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II. Do we pray like Jesus? He prayed in an humble and irksome attitude, and in solitude. We have not courage to leave the crowd and remain alone for an hour, or even for a few minutes, every day, or a few days every year, that we may converse with God. We can only pray well in company, with our family, or with the Faithful in church. If we are alone, and not encouraged by the example of others, prayer fails on our lips and in our hearts. When we pray, what is our attitude? Alas! it is often far from reverent. What love of ease in our posture! what want of repose! what love of change! Our bearing is that of people who are wearied, and it seems as if the time we spend with God hung heavy on our hands.

Jesus in His Agony prayed with perseverance, resignation, and confidence. We are soon tired of asking; if we are not heard immediately we complain, we lose our confidence and fervour, and our prayers become indolent and lukewarm, or we even give up prayer altogether, and deny its efficacy. We would have God yield to our caprices; we can hardly bear to be refused the thing we ask, even if our Heavenly Father gives us something better in its stead. When shall we learn that prayer must be a struggle, a conflict, an agony?

The mortal sadness and bitter anguish of Jesus only made His Prayer the longer and more earnest. Do we turn to prayer as a refuge

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in our heaviness, desolation, and grief? Do we prolong our prayer? Do we pray the more earnestly? When trouble comes upon us, we accuse our enemies, we even accuse Providence, and we neglect our ordinary exercises of piety. If prosperity makes us depart from God, adversity does not always bring us near Him. The ungrateful misuse His benefits, and those who are weak and blind do not see that it is a Father's hand that corrects them to make them better, that brings them down in order to raise them up. O Lord, make me a man of prayer, that I may be patient and full of good works. Give me the love of prayer, and teach me to meditate, that I may bear Thee company in the Grotto of Thine Agony, and may be like Thee, a man of sorrows and of desires.

III. For whom do we pray? Jesus prayed for all the just, and for all sinners, for the souls that follow Him along the way of sorrows, and for those who are in danger of being lost. In His Sweat of Blood all the pores of His Body were like so many mouths, praying for us. Does not our selfishness confine our prayers to a very narrow circle? Do we make prayer a universal apostolate? Do we pray for all the Faithful departed? Do we pray for all who are unhappy in this world? When a poor man asks us for alms, and we are unable to give it, do we at least say a short prayer for him? Do we pray for all who have been made desolate by family

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troubles, or reverses of fortune? Do we pray for the sick and dying whom we are unable to visit? Do we ask the grace of a holy death, and of union with Jesus in suffering, for others as well as for ourselves?

To accomplish the great work of the salvation of the world, Jesus in His Agony uses means which seem small, He falls on His Face and He prays. Shame on us! who even when we undertake the least things would use means that are great in men's eyes. We will not have humiliations, we will not fall on the ground, we will not have suffering, we will not make prolonged or repeated prayers. Nevertheless, the secret of suffering in an Apostolic manner, and of working usefully, is to pray well. When we humble ourselves before God, we raise up our souls; when we fall prostrate to earth, Heaven is opened to us. O Lord Jesus, my hope and the hope of all the afflicted and of all the dying, is in Thine holy Agony, in Thy precious Sweat of Blood, and in Thine ardent humble Prayer. I will unite my sorrow to Thine that they may be fruitful, I will unite my prayers to Thine that they may become fervent. I will contemplate Thee, that I may have courage to agonise, and to pray with Thee, and may be able to pour balm into wounded hearts, and to help forward the salvation of the eighty thousand who die each day.

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III. — Jesus in His Agony visits the sleeping Apostles.

And He cometh to His Disciples and findeth them asleep, and He saith to Peter, "Simon, sleepest thou? couldst thou not watch one hour? Watch ye and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Again the second time, He went and prayed, saying: "My Father, if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, Thy will be done." And He cometh again, and findeth them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy, and they knew not what to answer Him. And leaving them, He went again; and He prayed the third time, saying the selfsame words. And He rose up from prayer, and cometh the third time to His Disciples, and saith to them, "Sleep you now, and take your rest. It is enough: the hour is come: behold, the Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go. Behold, he that will betray Me is at hand" (St. Matt. xxvi. 40—44, 46; St. Mark xiv. 37—42; St. Luke xxii. 45, 46).

I. Watch and pray. Jesus in His Agony watched and prayed for His Disciples while they were asleep. The Church, after the example of her Lord, watches and prays when one of her members is falling asleep. She prays in the person of all pious souls, who strive to ensure

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the perseverance or conversion of a relation or friend, or even of some dying person unknown to them; she watches in the person of the Priest, who would let no mortal go to meet his Judge before he had visited and instructed him, brought him to penitence, and reconciled him to God. She watches and prays by the solicitude which tender mothers, Christian wives, or pious children, have for the souls they love. And we, who ought to be the apostles of the dying, we whom our Saviour has chosen to convey to them the treasures of His Agonising Heart, we are not faithful to the spirit and practices of our charitable Association, we yield to an unworthy sleep, we have not zeal enough to watch and pray with our Divine Master.

Nevertheless, He says to us as well as to His first Disciples, *Watch and pray.* They took no heed of His warning voice, and we are like them; we, who have been united to our Lord in the Sacrament of His Love, lose courage when we are called to confess Him publicly. Our sadness, our fears, our weariness, our cowardice and insensibility, make us unfit to watch with and for Jesus, the Church, and the dying. The Saviour would have us watch and pray. To pray without watching, is to presume on grace, and to expect victory without conflict; watchfulness is man's cooperation with the grace won by prayer. Prayer and watchfulness united are the strength of the soul. O Jesus, give me

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to watch and pray with Thee, that I may perceive my enemy's approach, and resist his attacks, that I may overcome temptation and do good.

II. Visit the dying. Our Saviour added sacrifices and good works to His Prayer, for He watched for His Apostles, and visited them while they slept. Prayer lays obligations upon us. We should be far more ready to pray, did we not feel that our prayers lay on us the obligation of pleasing God, of keeping His commandments, perhaps even of following His counsels! Pious people would not bring the ridicule they often do on religion if they were as careful to practise devotion, patience, gentleness and charity, as they are to repeat prayers. It costs a sinner little to pray, but a great deal to conform his life to his prayer. We can easily pray a little for the salvation of the dying, but it is no light thing to pray earnestly and perseveringly, to suffer and to labour, to make some sacrifice of our goods, our leisure, and our ease, that we may help them in their necessities, may lighten their darkness, and console their errors.

What good we might do by visiting those who are sleeping on the very brink of eternity! We might arouse their conscience, dispel their prejudices, open their eyes to the light of faith, and their hearts to the fire of charity. Our Agonising Lord interrupted His own Prayer to visit His Apostles, to teach them prudence, to

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confirm them in the path of duty, and to warn them against temptation. His universal charity embraced all the dying, He saw that some of them were in the deep sleep of impiety or idolatry, that others were tempted to despair, and exposed to all the wiles of the Evil One. He prayed for them, He groaned and suffered for them, each drop of His Sweat was a benediction for them. O my Lord, how much Thou lovest the dying, and how little I love them! My compassion is wanting in efficacy, in activity, in generosity, and in patience. My horror of the approach of death keeps me from visiting the dying. I shrink from their paled faces and glazed eyes, from the cold sweat and the death-rattle. Sweet Jesus, give me courage and love like Thine, if Thou wouldst have me promote the conversion, the sanctification, and the eternal salvation of my dying brethren.

III. Repeat your efforts. The Saviour made repeated prayers to God, and repeated visits to His Apostles. These repetitions were a proof of His maternal anxiety; they increased at once the pain and the merit of His Agony. What a contrast between the disciples who never once visit Jesus in the Grotto of the Agony, and Jesus, Who, like a tender mother, visits His sleeping children three times! He reproves them and they sleep, He excuses them and they sleep, He rouses them and they sleep again. Repetition is a law of life, it is painful or

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pleasant according to circumstances. But the Associates of the Agonising Heart, or of the Holy Agony, must not wonder if they have to repeat their prayers and efforts without any apparent result. This is a condition of the success of their Apostolate, an increase of their mental sufferings, and a homage they pay to the Saviour's Agony.

Jesus had often prayed, but He had not been known to interrupt His Prayer as He now did in the Garden of Olives, impelled by His charity to men and His devotion to His Disciples. Those Disciples were ignorant and earthly, but He is not repelled by their want of understanding. He perseveres in loving them, spite of their ingratitude and cowardice; He wishes to teach them, to form them, and put them on their guard against danger. But I am impatient of interruption, even when it is for my neighbour's benefit! I wish for immediate success, I want to comfort or convert souls all at once! Yet persevering prayers and efforts are most necessary in the service of the afflicted and the dying! One moment more, and this dear soul may be called to leave this world, may be in Heaven or in hell: what an alternative! Can I shrink from repeating my efforts! Shall I not follow the example of Jesus in His Agony? How unworthy a disciple am I of such a Master!

If my courage fails me, it is because I do not

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often enough come before God in prayer: prayer is the soul of action; perseverance in visiting the sick and the poor is won by often visiting Calvary, Gethsemani, the Guest-Chamber, the Tabernacle where Jesus always dwells. O my God and Saviour, I will follow Thee, I will be Thy faithful companion in Thine Agonies, I will watch and pray with Thee. I will be like our Lady of Compassion, Thy Mother and mine; like her I will join my sorrows to Thy sorrows, my fears to Thy fears, my weariness to Thy weariness, my heaviness to Thy heaviness; my will to Thine in entire submission to the will of Thy Father and my Father. I will thus make amends to Thee for my coldness and indifference, I will win for Thee ardent worshippers and zealous disciples, I will be the apostle of the agonising and the consoler of the afflicted. O Divine Heart of Jesus, give me a larger share of Thy Agonies, that I may make others love and serve Thee better. Give me fortitude to look forward to trials, to meet difficulties, that I may follow Thee more generously along the royal road of the Cross, and by my sorrows may help forward the salvation of the world.

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III.

DAILY PRAYER FOR THOSE IN THEIR AGONY.

O most merciful Jesus, lover of souls, I pray Thee by the Agony of Thy most Sacred Heart, and by the sorrows of Thine Immaculate Mother, cleanse in Thine own Blood the sinners of the whole world, who are now in their agony, and who are to die this day. Amen.

Heart of Jesus, once in agony, pity the dying!

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IV.

DAILY PRAYER FOR THE AFFLICTED.

O heavenly comforter of the afflicted, tender Mary, whose heart was so full of compassion for Jesus in His Agony, take pity on the sorrows of His members. Comfort all the afflicted, who are thy children, as thou didst comfort thy Divine Son in His mortal sadness. Obtain for

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those who are bowed down under the weight of trials, such grace that they may not seek for consolations in order to escape the Cross, but in order to bear it after the example of our generous Saviour. Help those who like Him are cast down by mental sorrow, that they may like Him arise to drink the chalice of bitterness with resignation, and to go forth and meet all difficulties courageously.

O Jesus, by the groanings of Thy Mother, and by the merits of Thy holy Agony, sustain, console, and sanctify all the souls who are to follow Thee this day along the way of sorrow.

V.

PRAYER TO JESUS THE CONSOLER.

O Jesus, be my angel of consolation! When others, whether men or Angels, console me, there are always some recesses of my heart which they cannot reach. But Thou, O my God, canst console me as entirely as Thou wouldst have me love Thee. Thou didst pour down consolation, where Thou wouldst find love, into my heart, and soul, and spirit, into all my powers, so that my very flesh and bones are filled with joy. Let me then pray to Thee in the words of one of Thy holy servants: "O Jesus, our chief hope and our only consolation,

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deign to strengthen us and to send Thy good Angels to strengthen us in all our tribulations and afflictions, and especially at our last hour, in the terrible conflict of death, so that by true penitence we may have a wholesome remembrance of Thy sorrows, of Thy Sweat of Blood, and of Thy Prayer. Amen."*

VI.

THE FIAT OF THE AGONY.

O my Creator and Father, I earnestly pray Thee to give me grace that I may repeat in all my prayers, as well as in all my sorrows, the *fiat* of the holy Agony of Thy Son Jesus. When I ask for the assistance necessary for my salvation, I know that Thou willest it for me in a far more noble and perfect way than I can for myself. This conviction will work in me the habit of entire conformity to Thy will, and this habit will soften my sorrows, and will sustain my strength when I have to face death. O my Saviour and Master, when I am overwhelmed with trial and desolation, when my body is worn out by sickness, let me still echo Thy cry, let my heart be in unison with Thine Heart. O Agonising Heart of Jesus, most sorrowful and

* Gerson, *Passio Domini*, textus secundus.

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most resigned Heart, come into my poor heart, come into the hearts of Thy people who are suffering spiritual martyrdom, come into the hearts of the dying, that we may be able to pronounce that heroic *fiat* which will make our sacrifice meritorious and our offering perfect.

VII.

ACCEPTANCE OF THE CHALICE.

Almighty God, my flesh trembles at the sight of the chalice Thou offerest me, my reason is troubled, my heart is fearful, my senses shrink from it; nevertheless I assure Thee that I do not desire to follow my own will. Even if my nature should rebel and cry out, Let this affliction pass, let not this cup of bitterness come to me; the voice of my soul will constantly say to Thee, Lord, I deserve it, I am a poor sinner, nothing is too bitter or too vile for me. Let it come from Thy holy hands into my defiled hands; since God has condescended to drink it, it should not seem bitter to me. But however bitter it may be, I refuse it not, I will follow Thy holy will, not my own. Thy will gives me strength and courage, and whatever comes from Thee I will welcome and bear with joy.*

* Surian, *Carême*, Sermon xxviii., la Passion, 1er point.

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Give me Thy chalice, O Lord, let me drink it to the dregs, let me take Thy place, let me suffer for Thee, with Thee, and like Thee.

VIII.

RESIGNATION TO SADNESS.

I will cast all my sorrows into the wonderful abyss of my dear Saviour's mortal sadness.

Soul of Jesus, sorrowful unto death, let me share Thy sorrow, which is better than all earthly joy. Since Thou dost suffer for my sake, since my sins are the cause of Thy sorrows, it is only just that I, in my turn, should suffer. Drive away from my heart the sorrow of the world, which worketh death, but give me instead the sorrow that is according to God, that worketh penance unto salvation, that having mourned for my sins, I may be made worthy to enter into the joy of my Lord and Master.*

* Antoine Anselme, *Sermons pour la Semaine Sainte*, 1er Sermon de la Passion, 1er partie.

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IX.

UNION OF OUR SUFFERINGS WITH THOSE OF JESUS.

My God, I unite myself with my whole heart to Thy holy Son Jesus, Who in His Sweat of Agony presented to Thee the prayers of all His suffering members. O God, Thou didst deliver Him up to sadness, weariness, and fear; the chalice which Thou gavest Him to drink was so fearful and so bitter, that He prayed Thee to remove it from Him. In union with His holy Soul, I pray Thee, O my God and Father, remove from me this fearful chalice; nevertheless, Thy will not mine be done. I receive it in union with that chalice which Thy Son, our Saviour, drank in obedience to Thee. The remedy is needed by me, O God; and I receive it from Thine hand with full confidence that Thou hast prepared it to heal me, and make me like Jesus Christ my Saviour. But, O my Lord, Thou hast promised that our struggles shall not be beyond our strength. Thou art faithful and true; I believe Thy word, and for Thy Son's sake, I pray Thee to give me strength, or to spare my weakness.

Jesus, my Saviour, name of mercy and grace, I unite myself to Thy holy Prayer in the Garden, to Thy Sweat, Thine Agony, Thine overwhelming sadness, the fear of Thy holy

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Soul, Thy weariness, the burden of Thine immense sorrow, to Thy loneliness, to the fearful sight of Thy Father's justice in array against Thee, to thy conflicts with evil spirits in Thy loneliness, to Thy victory over these cruel enemies, to Thine abasement and deep humiliations, which make all creatures in Heaven, and earth, and hell, bow the knee before Thee; in short, I unite myself to Thy Cross, and to everything by which we are nailed to the Cross. Have pity on all sinners, and on me the greatest, comfort me, convert me, bring me low, make me worthy to be Thy servant. Amen.*

X.

DESIRE FOR SUFFERING.

I am an exile, a stranger on earth, and yet I seek to make this vale of tears a paradise of delights. I wish to be sheltered from all trouble, to pass my days in uninterrupted repose; though I am a follower of a crucified God, I am not ashamed to take pleasure for my share, and leave suffering to Him. O Lord, how little I am like Thee; not content with letting Thy murderers shed Thy Blood, Thou didst pour it

* Bossuet, *Œuvres*, Edition de Versailles, 1816, t. x., pp. 603, 604.

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forth beforehand in a Sweat on the ground. My Saviour, my God, Thou art the glory of Paradise, the treasure of Heaven and earth, how long shall my life be so unlike Thine? Change the selfish delicacy of my heart into an ardent desire to suffer for Thee. Let the virtue of the Divine Blood, so freely shed by Thee, give me such grace that Thy Saints may glorify Thee for me.*

XI.

THE SAME.

O afflicted Heart of my Saviour, if none of Thy Disciples come to console Thee, here at least am I, a sinner. Alas! too long have I forsaken Thee, and spite of all Thy torments hastened towards my own ruin. But it is past! never more will I increase Thy sorrows. Behold me, O Jesus, knocking at the door of Thy mercy, and with sincere hatred of my sins, praying for pardon. Oh, I beseech Thee, appease the offended justice of Thy Divine Father, for Thou hast suffered in order to expiate my sins and to pay my ransom. Share with me Thy torments and pains; give me a part of Thy sadness and agony. Let me lose everything

* Pinamonti, *Motifs de Consolation dans la souffrance.* Dimanche.

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dearest to me on earth; let everything become bitter to me, rather than that I should ever be separated from Thee. Sorrow will be sweet to me if only I may console Thine Heart, and bathe with my tears the wounds my sins have made there.*

XII.

COLLOQUY WITH JESUS IN HIS AGONY.

O Lord, I spoke as a fool when I prayed Thee to lessen my troubles and pains; now I ask rather that I may suffer more with Thee. My Father, let my heaviness and weariness, my sorrow and sickness increase, let the temptations of the Evil One even be multiplied; if only Thou wilt give me patience and strength to resist. Comfort me, O Jesus, Angel of strength, Who hast come down from Heaven, strengthen me in the hour of battle, for I am fighting for Thy kingdom within me. Be to me a fiery pillar by night, and a cloudy pillar by day. Where wast Thou, O Lord, while I was undergoing so many torments, while I was a prey to the suggestions of the enemy? Take hold of arms and shield, and rise up to help me. I should be desolate if Thou didst not abide with me, O Angel of Consolation, sent by Thy

* Franco, *Nouveau manuel de la dévotion au Sacré Cœur*, p. 3, neuvaine, jour vi.

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Heavenly Father to comfort the weak and the infirm. Amongst my friends and neighbours there is no one who can or will help me; all my acquaintance are but troublesome comforters. Thou alone, O Jesus, my beloved, art a strong and faithful Friend in every trouble, Thou art my staff, Thou raisest me up when I fall.

My Saviour is in anguish and Agony; He sweats Blood, because He is disquieted on account of the dangers to which I am exposed in my afflictions. I thank Thee, O my most Loving Supporter! My Saviour prolongs His Prayer, not for His own sake, but for mine, that I may not be overcome in the hour of my agony. Who, then, shall separate me from my God? My Saviour is like a grape in the wine-press; He sheds forth a Sweat of Blood. And I, stretched on a soft bed, am without any uneasiness as to the sentence which is to decide my eternal fate! O Heavenly Samaritan, come to me and have pity on my soul; take care of me and pour oil and wine into my wounds. Let Thy Sweat of Blood like the dew of night refresh me, and be a precious balm to heal me.

Behold, O God our Protector, and look on the Face of Thy Christ, Who sweats, Who prays, and wrestles for me. Give me now the strength of the Patriarch Jacob, that I may wrestle with Angels, especially with the Angel of the Covenant, and not let Him go till He has blessed me.*

* Moretus, *Solatia Morientium*, s. vi.

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XIII.

PRAYER TO OUR LADY.

O most merciful Mary, Refuge of Sinners, and Help of Christians, I pray thee, by the sorrows of thy most compassionate Heart, and by the Agony and Death of Jesus, thy beloved Son, obtain for me grace to bear with resignation and love the afflictions, sicknesses, trials and temptations, which the Lord in His justice and mercy would have me undergo. O most afflicted Mother, I unite my intentions to the holy intentions of thy compassionate Heart, and of the Agonising Heart of thy Son in the Garden of Olives and on the Cross. Sanctify my sorrows, that they may gain merit for Heaven, and may help forward the salvation of souls. Queen of Martyrs, I pray thee to gain the same graces for all who are in affliction. Ask God to give each one of them, and me in particular, strength, courage, confidence, and the spirit of faith and love, so that, being purified in the furnace of tribulation, we may one day be worthy to be with thee in eternal glory. Amen.*

* Lyonnard, *La Supplication perpétuelle au Cœur compatissant de Marie*, p. 143.

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XIV.

OFFERING OF THE AGONISING HEART TO GOD THE FATHER.

O Jesus, it was I who put Thy Heart into the wine-press, where It shed Its Blood. Let one drop of that Blood fall on my cold heart, to animate it and set it on fire with love of Thee. Let my heart obey the grace which follows it, and always love Thee more. I shall never love Thee enough, I shall never love Thee as I wish to do. Thou hast chosen my soul to be Thy spouse; purify it in Thy Precious Blood, that it may be more loving and faithful to Thee. O God, my Father and the Father of Jesus, what shall I offer to Thee in satisfaction for all my iniquities? I have nothing worthy of Thee, nothing that can be pleasing to Thee. But in the wine-press of Gethsemani I see the Heart of Thy Beloved Son pouring forth Its Blood to satisfy Thy justice. That Blood is mine, that Heart is mine; Jesus gave them to me that I might offer them to Thee. Receive, therefore, O Lord, the Blood of Jesus and the Heart of Jesus; I offer them to Thee as a sacrifice of penance and of expiation. Canst Thou refuse such a Victim? No, I am persuaded Thou never canst, for Thou hast never despised a contrite and humbled heart, and this is the

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Heart of Thine only Son, in Whom Thou art well pleased.*

XV.

TO OBTAIN THE GIFT OF PRAYER.

O Jesus, most loving Saviour, give me a portion of the spirit which animated Thee in the Garden of Olives, so that my barren prayer may become like Thine. Thine was no dry meditation, no useless speculation, but led to practical acts of the will. Thy love for me did not grow cold at the sight of Thy sufferings. Thou didst submit to them and accept them with every token of most prompt and loving obedience. O Jesus, how different is my prayer from Thine, for it is lukewarm, cold, and indolent, but Thine is full of submission, fervour, and love. Take pity on me; give me courage to imitate Thy virtues, and especially Thy submission, strengthen my resolutions, and make them efficacious by the help of Thy holy grace.†

* Cajetan-Mary of Bergamo, *Pensées et affections sur la Passion*, jour. xcv.

† *Ibid.*, jour. lxxix.

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XVI.

PRAYER FOR CONTRITION.

Lord Jesus, make our hearts like Thine; as Thou hast given us an example of contrition, give us grace to follow it. In Thy mortal Agony Thou saidst to Thy Father that His wrath had come upon Thee, and His terrors had troubled Thee. "In me transierunt iræ tuæ, et terrores tui conturbaverunt me" (Psalm lxxxvii. 17). But Lord, I would say to Thee—"In me transeant iræ tuæ, et terrores tui conturbent me." Let Thy fear and trouble and sadness penetrate into my heart. Let Thy Soul so transform my soul that I may fear Thy fear, may be troubled as Thou art troubled, may be sad with Thy sadness. O my God, make me to see my sins as Thou seest them, make me to weep for them as Thou hast wept, make me to feel them with the same horror as Thou hast felt for them; show me their consequences as Thou hast seen them, that I may shudder at them as Thou hast done.*

XVII.

FOR THE SAME.

O Jesus, full of love, there are no scourges, nor thorns, nor nails to rend Thy Flesh in the

* Hubert, *Sermon* pour le Vendredi Saint, pt. ii.

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Garden, yet I see Thee bathed in Blood from Head to Foot. Alas! my sins are the cruel wine-press which makes the Blood flow from Thy Heart. I was one of Thy cruel tormentors, I was there with my sins to add to Thy sufferings. But now, since sorrow for my faults is the only means by which I can console Thee, I will repent with all my heart. Give me such sorrow that I may mourn continually until my last breath for all the grief I have caused Thee, my God, my Love, and my All. Divine Mourner, let me share the sorrow Thou hast felt for my sins. I detest them, and I unite my hatred of them to that which Thou didst feel in the Garden.*

XVIII.

PRAYER FOR THE LOVE OF GOD.

O most merciful Jesus, how can I express all that I owe Thee, for the bitterness with which Thy Holy Soul was filled that I might taste heavenly sweetness. How much I am indebted to Thee for the fear Thou didst bear in order to encourage my cowardly soul, and make it strong in virtue! How different I am from Thee! When I am in affliction I only think of looking

* St. Liguori, *L'Amore delle anime*, cap. vi., n. 8.

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for some consolation, that I may suffer as little as possible, but Thy love is ingenious in increasing Thy sufferings. O Divine Mediator, Thou art troubled and fearful that Thou mayest comfort me in my affliction, mayest strengthen me in my weakness, and give me a sure hope of salvation. Make me to comprehend Thine ardent charity. I wish to love Thee, but alas! how poor and empty is my heart. Grant me Thy love, I pray Thee, by the merits of Thy Holy Soul, and by all It suffered for my salvation in the Garden of Olives.*

* Cajetan-Mary of Bergamo, *Pensées et affections sur la Passion*, jour. lxi.

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